

**Recreating the Rwandan State and Citizen: An Analysis of Diaspora Politics and its Role in  
Transforming Rwandan Identities**

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## Abstract

This dissertation utilizes a descriptive case study method to provide a comprehensive and critical analysis of identity politics in Rwanda. More specifically, this thesis situates identity politics in nation building in post-genocide Rwanda. In order to do so, this study examines diaspora engagement politics.

The central question in this thesis is: *In what ways, and to what extent, have identity politics affected the nation building project in post-genocide Rwanda, in relation to its diaspora?*

Rwanda's turbulent history raises many issues regarding the political and social construction of Rwandan identity, but scholarship has not thoroughly examined the diaspora and state engagement with the diaspora. This thesis sought to examine these dynamics. It will do so by examining: (1) the ways in which the Rwandan Patriotic Front reconfigured identities inside Rwanda by perpetuating the narrative of unity; (2) the collective identities ascribed to groups of citizens inside and outside Rwanda, based on this government narrative; (3) how the RPF governed perceptions abroad; and finally (4) the education programs to shape the ideal Rwandan citizen.

This thesis concludes that the Rwandan government, while trying to rebuild the nation, has failed to transcend divisive identities that have pervaded in Rwanda. Instead, it has created a tightly controlled political space in which a restrictive single identity and narrative existed; furthermore, identity politics have been increasingly manipulated and controlled by the state apparatus. The state's engagement with its diaspora illustrates this.

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## Chapter 1: Introduction

The post-genocide Rwandan context is “extraordinarily complex,” as Rwandan scholar Gerard Prunier described.<sup>1</sup> One cannot begin to understand the dynamics of Rwanda’s political and social realities after its devastating 1994 genocide without examining identity politics. As historian Newbury observed: “Being Rwandan is only one level of identity among others.”<sup>2</sup> In Rwanda, the most historically salient causes of intergroup conflict are disputes over identity and citizenship, and these have been linked to mobility. There has been a complexity of relations between mobility and state formation in Rwanda.<sup>3</sup> However, identity in Rwanda is much more complex than a “uni-dimensional Hutu-Tutsi duality.”<sup>4</sup>

Suzanne Buckley-zistal says: “Struggles about citizenship have been central to violent conflicts in Africa for some time.”<sup>5</sup> In the case of Rwanda, the “struggle for citizenship” alludes to the impact of mobility in Rwanda; it is historically rooted and is part of how identity politics form. Clashing perceptions of between the government and its people on group identity have significantly problematic implications for nation building and reconciliation efforts in post-genocide Rwanda.

Moreover, a defining element of the country’s government, the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF), was that it was a government “born out of diasporic return”<sup>6</sup> as it entered Rwanda and took control of the capital in 1994 and effectively ended the genocide. Thus, identities based on shared lived experiences linked to mobility are crucial to understanding identity based politics in Rwanda in its post-genocide transition. Mass displacement of people has been historically significant in Rwanda. Rwanda has a history of violent conflict that has led to mass exodus of people leaving Rwanda to neighboring countries, thus forming diaspora communities. Rwanda’s

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<sup>1</sup> Gerard Prunier, *The Rwanda Crisis: History of a Genocide* (London: C. Hurst & Co, 1995).

<sup>2</sup> David Newbury, “Returning Refugees: Four Historical Patterns of ‘Coming Home’ to Rwanda.” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 47, no. 2 (2005): 284.

<sup>3</sup> Simon Turner, “Victims, Saviors and Suspects: Channeling Mobility in Post-Genocide Rwanda,” in *Mobility Makes States: Migration and Power in Africa*, eds. Joel Quirk & Darshan Vigneswaran (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2015), 103.

<sup>4</sup> Andrea Purdekova, “Beyond De-Ethnicisation in Post-Genocide Rwanda: Deconstruction of Identity Discourse, Reconstruction of a Political Community.” *Department of International Development*, Oxford University, (2010): 2.

<sup>5</sup> Suzanne Buckley-zistal, “Dividing and Uniting: The Use of Citizenships Discourses in Conflict and Reconciliation in Rwanda.” *Global Society* 20, no. 1 (2006): 132.

<sup>6</sup> Turner, “Victims, Saviors and Suspects,” 79.

diasporic events were so tumultuous and prominent and had huge implications: Mamdani called Rwanda's diaspora "the most volatile of all diasporic networks in the region."<sup>7</sup>

Identity is key to understanding post-genocide politics, but must be looked at holistically by taking into account the diaspora nature of identity formation. Identity goes beyond ethnicities, as much of the literature on Rwanda seems to singularly suggest. Instead, Rwandans have diverse self-identities reflected through their very different experiences of the genocide. These diverse experiences were based on differences in identity which included both self-identity and state-defined identity. Most notably, identity in Rwanda was not only defined by ethnic categories. Purdekova instead described identity in post-genocide Rwanda not only as "victim and participant, but also bystander, absentee or savior."<sup>8</sup> As this paper will show, none of these completely fit ethnic categories.

Purdekova, writing on de-ethnicization in Rwanda, noted that Rwanda is not simply a "country of Hutus and Tutsis... The diversity and the dividing and connecting lines have always been more complex, and they have been changing over time. They are perhaps even more complex today after the genocide and the vast post-genocide returns from multiple countries of exile."<sup>9</sup> This relationship to home and the shared lived experience of being a part of the Rwandan diaspora have important implications in post-genocide Rwanda.

It is thus necessary to explore the strong societal division that still exist in Rwanda post-genocide, and while attention has been given to repatriation and returnees from diaspora, identity politics must be examined in the context of the bigger picture, in terms of the relationship between the state and diaspora. By examining this relationship, we can see the extent to which identity politics has transcended the pre and post-genocide period, and examine their role in building a united Rwanda. Thus, the RPF's diaspora politics, as well as its diaspora identities, are key to understanding the political nature of post-genocide Rwanda.

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<sup>7</sup> Mahmood Mamdani, *When Victims Become Killers, Colonialism, Nativism, and the Genocide in Rwanda* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2001)

<sup>8</sup> Purdekova, "Beyond De-Ethnicisation," 10.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 6.

## 1.1 Research Question

*In what ways, and to what extent, have identity politics affected the nation building project in post-genocide Rwanda, in relation to its diaspora?*

Supporting Questions:

1. What explains the nature of the RPF's engagements with the diaspora in post-genocide Rwanda?
2. In what ways has the government sought to rebuild the nation after genocide, in respects to its state-diaspora relations?
3. What role does the diaspora play in post-genocide Rwanda?
4. How has the Rwandan government engaged with the diapsora?
5. What can the state's engagement with its diaspora tell us about reconciliation in Rwanda?
6. To what extent are identity politics still relevant in post-genocide Rwanda?

## 1.2 Method

This thesis is a comprehensive and critical analysis of the nature of identity politics in Rwanda. I employ a case study method, drawing upon Robert Yin's conceptualization of a case study and its value. Yin defines a case study as "an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between the phenomenon and context are not clearly evident."<sup>10</sup> Thus in the case of Rwanda, this method is useful in analyzing the complexity of the single case.

More specifically, I use a descriptive case study method. While a disadvantage of a case study is that it does not build on theory, its value is that this method allows me to contribute to a deeper understanding of nation building in Rwanda. It is mostly a descriptive analysis because I seek to capture the complexities of Rwanda's post-genocide identity politics by analyzing the "what"

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<sup>10</sup> Robert Yin. *Case Study Research: Design and Methods*, (Thousand Oaks, California: Sage Publications, 2003),



and “how” questions. A descriptive case study is useful because it provides flexibility in the way that I explore a case that has not been extensively researched by others in the field. In this sense, I employ this method through my interpretation of reframing Rwanda’s nation building process through the context of diaspora politics.

Thus, an important value of a case study is through its research method; I will seek to capture the complexities of the post-genocide nation building in Rwanda by relying on multiple sources to provide a well-rounded analysis. For this thesis I draw from variety of sources, including works by other scholars, speeches from policy-makers, government documents, and other government sources to critically examine identity politics in Rwanda.

The goal of this case study is not to support or disprove a theory, nor is it to provide the basis for a generalization. Instead, the goal is to contribute to a wider and deeper understanding of the case as it can be intensively examined in order to reach conclusions given an extensive analysis of post-genocide nation governance in Rwanda.

## Chapter 2: Analysis of Existing Literature on the Rwandan Nation, Identity, and Diaspora

A literature review of Rwanda's post-genocide politics shows that this is a vast and extensive topic for genocide and Rwandan scholars. Many scholars have examined post-genocide politics in Rwanda, focusing on different aspects of the genocide, analyzing the government's role in post-genocide rebuilding and reconciliation. Many scholars have been very critical of the government's policies and actions, questioning its implications for lasting reconciliation.<sup>11</sup> While there is a lot of scholarship on post-genocide governance, and identity politics, only in recent years have more scholars looked at mobility linked with politics and the Rwandan diaspora specifically.

One concept that some scholars have identified is how the government had represented itself as a post-genocide government. Related to this are the politics of representation, truth telling, political labeling, and victimhood. These are prevalent themes that are common in literature analyzing Rwanda's post-genocide politics.

A key aspect of post-genocide Rwandan governance is what Johan Pottier describes as "essentialist labeling".<sup>12</sup> Pottier stipulates that inside Rwanda, there is the "tendency to substitute collective guilt for personal responsibility." Certain labels are prescribed to the Hutu community as a group. This, Pottier argues, is a "prime ingredient in the perpetuation of violence throughout the Great Lakes." In his book *Re-Imagining Rwanda: Conflict, Survival and Disinformation in the Late Twentieth Century*, Pottier examined the government narrative and how it is represented and misrepresented by others, particularly in terms of labeling refugees. This discourse on ethnicity reinforced a notion of collective guilt, which has proven to be very problematic, particularly in the international aid effort. The state's relation to the diaspora has been included in this literature on political identities, but only to a limited extent. Some studies focus on the development aspect of the Rwandan diaspora, or of the refugee crisis in the post-genocide years.

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<sup>11</sup> Filip Reyntjens. "Rwanda, Ten Years On: From Genocide to Dictatorship," *African Affairs* 103, no. 411 (2004): 3; Helen Hintjens, "Post-Genocide Identity Politics in Rwanda," *Ethnicities* 8, no. 1 (2008); Prunier, *The Rwanda Crisis*.

<sup>12</sup> Johan Pottier, *Re-Imagining Rwanda: Conflict, Survival and Disinformation in the Late Twentieth Century*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

Identity politics is a prominent topic amongst the literature on Rwanda, most often as a key to understanding and explaining the horrific genocide of 1994. Mahmood Mamdani is a leading scholar of Rwandan identities. Mamdani's influential work, *When Victims Become Killers* defines the "crisis of postcolonial citizenships. He questions: why and how was Hutu made into a native identity and Tutsi into a settler identity?"<sup>13</sup> Mamdani shows that the discourse of native and settler did not stop with the end of colonialism and explains how the genocide of 1994 came to happen. His work is a significant contribution to understanding political identity and citizenship discourse in Rwanda.

In analyzing the Rwandan government's post-genocide politics, scholars have also looked at political labeling and how that plays into identity politics. Historian Jennie Burnet<sup>14</sup> critiques the national government's role in promoting "national unity," by enacting different policies. She discusses the role of political labeling and representation of "victims" and "perpetrators" in post-genocide Rwanda. Burnet argues that ethnicity still played a role in the "policing of identity."<sup>15</sup> She also discusses "politicizing victimhood," arguing that in post-genocide Rwanda, certain terms like "survivors" are classified with Tutsis. Thus, she argues that the government has instrumentalized the genocide to justify its own political power. Furthermore, the government does not allow open discussions about ethnicity, and there is still an "amplified silence" that furthers the problem.

Helen Hintjens also discusses this concept of the Rwandan government's political labeling and discusses this concept in the context of the Rwandan diaspora and more specifically, identity politics. In her article "Reconstructing Political Identities in Rwanda," she questions whether Rwandans are now freer to choose their political identities than they were before the 1994 genocide," and argue they might not be. Labels like "old caseload refugees" and "new caseload refugees" can be a misleading way to label entire groups of people"<sup>16</sup> Furthermore, she examines whether or not the transitional Government of National Unity has been able to reconstruct

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<sup>13</sup> Mamdani, *When Victims Become Killers*, 19.

<sup>14</sup> Jennie Burnet, "Whose Genocide? Whose Truth?: Representations of Victim and Perpetrator in Rwanda." In *Genocide: Truth, Memory, and Representation*, edited by Alexander Laban Hinton and Kevin Lewis O'Neill, 81-111. Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 2009.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., 86.

<sup>16</sup> Helen Hintjens, "Reconstructing Political Identities in Rwanda," in *After Genocide: Transitional Justice, Post-Conflict Reconstruction and Reconciliation in Rwanda and Beyond*, edited by Phil Clark and Z. Kaufman, 105 – 127. London: Hurst & Company, 2009, 80.

Rwandan political identities along non-racial lines a decade and a half after the genocide,” arguing that race labels have been reconstructed and reinterpreted by the government. She does this in the context of the stories of three Rwandan exiles, arguing that Rwanda’s political identities are still restricted by genocidal identities.

Similarly, Cori Wielenga also discusses identity politics in the context of nation building.<sup>17</sup> She argues that the focus of identity politics in Rwanda today is replacing ethnic identity with civic identity, and creating a united Rwandan identity for nation building. Wielenga’s argument, based on months of field work in Rwanda, is that identity politics in Rwanda continue to revolve around ethnicity. Furthermore, she argues that in reality, lived identities of Rwandans are much more complex than a simplistic dual-ethnic mode of identity.

Related to diaspora identity politics are concepts of citizenship discourse. Susanne Buckley-Zistel<sup>18</sup> and Kelly O’Connor<sup>19</sup> both look at how the government has utilized citizenship discourse in Rwanda and its implications for reconciliation. O’Connor examines repatriation efforts in Rwanda, and argues that the “ideal citizen” portrayed by Rwandan state discourse “places more emphasis on national belonging and obligations...rather than rightful demands on the state”<sup>20</sup> Similarly, Buckley-zistal observes that the Rwandan government used citizenship discourse to create national unity, yet while there may be unity in Rwanda, there is no reconciliation.

Finally, few scholars have specifically focused on the state’s engagement with the Rwandan diaspora. Reiko Shindo<sup>21</sup> assesses diaspora return programs, exploring their role in the development aspect of Rwanda and looks at their implications for the post genocide Rwandan context. She argues that diaspora policies are reflective of the post-conflict situation in Rwanda, and that diaspora return program is a part of the government’s “national project,” thus the diaspora plays an important role for the government, especially in terms of national development.

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<sup>17</sup> Cori Wielenga, “‘Lived’ Identities in Rwanda – Beyond Ethnicity?” *African Insight* 44, no.1 (2014):122-136.

<sup>18</sup> Buckley-zistal, “Dividing and Uniting.”

<sup>19</sup> Kelly O’Connor, “Repatriation: The Politics of (Re)-constructing and Contesting Rwandan Citizenship.” *Refugee Studies Centre Working Paper Series*, no. 92, University of Oxford (2013).

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> Reiko Shindo, “The Hidden Effect of Diaspora Returns to Post-Conflict Countries,” *Third World Quarterly* 33, no. 9 (2012): 1685-1702.

Similar to Shindo, Simon Turner is critical of the government's relations with the diaspora, arguing that the government is "staging" its relations with the diaspora to show a narrative that is part of Rwanda's nation building project.<sup>22</sup> He argues that this comes to serve certain purposes, like attracting resources, bringing members of the diaspora "under closer control," and "performing and hence creating the state itself."<sup>23</sup> He notes that engaging with the diaspora is a central part of post-genocide state building.

Moreover, Turner's subsequent work illustrates how the narrative in post-genocide Rwanda is that the government made categories based on citizens as victims, saviors, and suspects, in the sense that it tries to "govern mobility" in Rwanda. He concludes that "statecraft is about controlling borders" but this created "insiders, outsiders, and leftovers."<sup>24</sup> Turner's work provides an excellent framework from which to build my own research on diaspora politics. While he look at how the government has three categories of citizens and links this with identities of mobility, I will build on this to offer a more comprehensive understanding of state practice and discourse in Rwanda.

While such scholars have explored critical concepts for understanding political identities in Rwanda, the topic has not been holistically and thoroughly explored in the context of diaspora relations, such as the changing nature of state-diaspora engagement in fitting with the changing political context. While identity politics in Rwanda has been explored, this thesis will examine identity politics it in the context of diaspora politics.

I draw upon the work of Mamdani, Hintjens, and Wielenga to navigate the discourse of political identities in post-genocide Rwanda. Their works provide substantial contributions to understanding how identities have been politicized and linked with state discourse. I will draw upon these conceptualizations to reinterpret them in the context of the Rwandan diaspora. Thus, this thesis will examine the role of identity politics throughout Rwanda's diaspora and problematize these identities. The objective of my paper is to provide a nuanced understanding of the RPF's nation building project, in the context with the Rwandan diaspora.

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<sup>22</sup> Simon Turner, "Staging the Rwanda Diaspora: The Politics of Performance" *African Studies* 72:2 (2013), 266.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 268.

<sup>24</sup> Turner, "Victims, Saviors and Suspects," 79.

## Chapter 3: Analytical Framework

This chapter provides the theoretical framework from which the discussions in this thesis are based, by defining and conceptualizing key concepts including: nation, identity, and citizen. The chapter situates these terms in the context of diaspora studies in Rwanda, and explains why the Rwandan diaspora is a useful and relevant framework for this case study on nation building in Rwanda

### 3.1 Reconceptualizing Diaspora Studies in Rwanda

This analytical framework aims to guide and contextualize concepts that link with diaspora studies, such as “nation”, “identity,” and “citizenship. For this case study on the Rwandan government’s nation building politics and governance, an examination of the diaspora ties in many related and relevant themes to nation building and identity politics in Rwanda. Malkki, an anthropologist who studied Hutu exile narratives, described:

Involuntary or forced movements of people are always only one aspect of much larger constellations of sociopolitical and cultural processes and practices. Nationalism and racism, xenophobia and immigration policies, state practices of violence and war, censorship and silencing, human rights and challenges to state sovereignty, "development" discourse and humanitarian interventions, citizenship and cultural or religious identities, travel and diaspora, and memory and historicity are just some of the issues and practices that generate the inescapably relevant context of human displacement today.<sup>25</sup>

In Rwanda, its diaspora history has a key role in shaping identities, discourse on citizenship, nationalism, and state politics. The post genocide state itself is one born out of diasporic return of a Tutsi elite, and the contemporary government continues to engage with the diaspora abroad and returning diaspora members. In general, all these processes have been managed in the context of state power and the state agenda. Most significantly, diaspora processes have played a key role in

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<sup>25</sup> Liisa Malkki, “Refugees and Exile: From ‘Refugee Studies’ to the National Order of Things,” *Annual Review of Anthropology* 24 (1995): 496.

the Rwandan government's post-genocide nation building agenda. Diaspora studies are inherently linked to a conception of the nation state, power based on territory, and distribution of rights through the concept of citizenship, as we shall see in the rest of this chapter.<sup>26</sup> First, a basic conceptualization of diaspora is necessary.

### 3.1 1 Defining Diaspora

What is meant by the term "Diaspora?" The term "diaspora" comes from the Greek word that means "to sow" or "to disperse."<sup>27</sup> This meaning, and its connotations, has changed over time. Diaspora studies have typically referred to the classical use of the term, the study of the Jewish experience. Then, in the 1980s, "diaspora" came to describe many different categories of people that included: expatriates, expellees, political refugees, alien residents, immigrants and ethnic/racial minorities."<sup>28</sup> Thus, the term diaspora has become an all-purpose term of various modes of population dispersal.<sup>29</sup>

Diaspora communities are formed from people migrating from a certain country, for a multitude of reasons under various circumstances. It can be because of conflict, poverty, natural disasters, or finding economic opportunities abroad. These reasons do not, however, automatically lead to diaspora community formation. For the purpose of discussion on the Rwandan diaspora, a key feature that determines a "diaspora community" is that the people of the diaspora retain some sort of attachment to their home country, regardless of the time they spent outside of that country.<sup>30</sup>

I draw upon Robin Cohen's conceptualization of diaspora. Cohen, a scholar on global diasporas, utilizes William Safran's definition of diaspora. Safran's work was one of the most influential and marked the beginning of contemporary diaspora studies. Safran uses the following as concepts of a diaspora, applied to members that share some of the following features to specific

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<sup>26</sup> O'Connor, "Repatriation," 3.

<sup>27</sup> Robin Cohen, *Global Diasporas: An Introduction* (New York: Routledge, 2008), xiv.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., 1.

<sup>29</sup> Luxshi Vimalarajah and R. Cheran, "Empowering Diasporas: The Dynamics of Post-war Transnational Tamil Politics," *Berghof Occasional Paper*, no. 31 (2010), 10.

<sup>30</sup> Huma Haider, "Transnational Transitional Justice and Reconciliation: The Participation of Conflict-generated Diasporas in Addressing the Legacies of Mass Violence," *Journal of Refugee Studies* 27, no. 2 (2014): 3.

characteristics that define a diaspora:

- *They retain a collective memory, vision or myth about their original homeland including its location, history and achievements;*
- *They believe they are not – and perhaps can never be – fully accepted in their host societies and so remain partly separate;*
- *Their ancestral home is idealized and it is thought that, when conditions are favourable, either they, or their descendants should return;*
- *They believe all members of the diaspora should be committed to the maintenance or restoration of the original homeland and to its safety and prosperity; and* • *they continue in various ways to relate to that homeland and their ethnocommunal consciousness and solidarity are in an important way defined by the existence of such a relationship.* <sup>31</sup>

Moreover, a key distinction made for migration and diaspora formation is whether or not it is “voluntary” or “forced” migration.<sup>32</sup> As Cohen argued on talking about collective trauma to a group, there is a stark difference: “Being shackled in manacles, being expelled by a tyrannical leader, or being coerced to leave by force of arms, mass riots or the threat of ‘ethnic cleansing’” is very different than leaving a country because of “general pressures of over-population, land hunger, poverty or a generally unsympathetic political environment.”<sup>33</sup> Thus, Cohen differentiates a *victim diaspora*, which has the key characteristic of the displaced people moving because they, or their ancestors, left a traumatic event in their homeland.<sup>34</sup>

### *Victim Diaspora*

A “victim diaspora,” or a “conflict-generated” diaspora is not only characterized by the fact that people left their home because of a traumatic event, but also that the memory of their homeland is still important to them and salient in the collective memory of the diaspora.<sup>35</sup> Moreover, conflict-generated diaspora communities often have significant roles in their homeland’s conflict.

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<sup>31</sup> Cohen, *Global Diasporas*, 6.

<sup>32</sup> Nicholas Van Hear, “The Rise of Refugee Diasporas,” *Current History* 108, no. 717 (2009):4.

<sup>33</sup> Cohen, *Global Diasporas*, 2.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*



In the context of Rwanda, we will later see how the origins of the RPF and its distinct ideology and consciousness were rooted in “conflict –generated” diasporic origins.<sup>36</sup>

Thus, specified definitions and concepts associated with “conflict-generated” diaspora is particularly useful for the study of Rwanda, whose history of mass displacement has been largely due to traumatic, violent upheavals of communities. Rwanda’s diaspora is very heterogeneous and makes up the group has changed with time, place, and political space. To understand the current state of Rwanda’s diasporic relationships, the country must be situated in its historical context, which also links with diaspora identity origins.

For the purpose of this paper, it is also important to note that diasporas are historical and political formations that are constructed at a specific point in time; their characteristics can change, and can definitely do so in political spaces. Thus, in the context of Rwanda’s nation building, diaspora identities come to have varied meanings, which the rest of this paper will explore

### 3.2 Conceptualizing the “Nation”

Conceptualizing the term “nation” is essential when analyzing a government’s nation building process. There is a vast amount of literature that has sought to define the concept of a “nation” and “nationality.” For the purpose of this thesis, Benedict Anderson’s notion of an “imagined community” will be used to conceptualize the “nation.” Anderson, in his notable work *Imagined Communities*, argues that the nation is an imagined politically community, and “is imagined because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion.”<sup>37</sup>

Moreover, Anderson describes “nationness” or “nationalism” as a form of consciousness that comes from specific circumstances and local, historically specific struggles. Moreover, nationalism is “not the awakening of nations to self-consciousness...it invents a nation where

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<sup>36</sup> Terrance Lyons, “Engaging Diasporas to Promote Conflict Resolution: Transforming Hawks into Doves,” Working Paper. Fairfax, Virginia: Institute of Conflict Analysis and Resolution, 2004.

<sup>37</sup> Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, (New York: Verso, 2006), 6.

they do not exist.”<sup>38</sup> For those living in diaspora communities and who have lived for years outside their state of origin, this concept is especially relevant. Furthermore, Malkki adds to Anderson’s characteristics of a nation and argues that it is not just that but nationalism is also consciously acknowledging its relation to other nation states.<sup>39</sup>

The relationship between nation states and diasporas is quite complex. For this study, I draw upon Haddad’s study of refugees and their role on forming national identities. Haddad uses the following conceptualization of the refugee in relation to the nation state: “Refugees act to reinforce the imagined construct of the nation-state by forming the ‘other’, the ‘outsider’ in relation to whom the identity of the nation and its citizens can be perpetuated. ...As nation-states are constructed, so the refugee is also constructed and the two concepts in some sense reinforce each other. Imagined national identities were only able to take hold by the simultaneous imagining of the ‘other’, and in many cases this ‘other’ has been the refugee.”<sup>40</sup>

This conceptualization is not limited to refugees only. Citizens of a country who move beyond its national borders, in the discourse of citizenship and belonging, pose a challenge to the notion of the nation state. In Rwanda’s case, this is evident in the government’s need to manage its citizens from afar, to control its ‘problematic’ diaspora, as I will examine later. This conceptualization will help us understand the dynamics of the diaspora, along with other key concepts like “citizen.”

### 3.2.1 Defining Citizen

The concept of a citizen is inherently linked to the concept of a nation. The politics of citizenship is key to an understanding of Rwanda’s history and contemporary state, and its diasporic characteristics. For the purposes of this paper, the idea of constructing a citizen, and its relation to state power, is particularly useful. I draw upon Foucault’s concept of governmentality to examine the power relations inherent in nation-building and citizen formation. Foucault argues that the citizen of the state becomes the subject that submits to the political regime, which are

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<sup>38</sup> Anderson, *Imagined Communities*.

<sup>39</sup> Liisa Malkki, “Citizens of Humanity: Internationalism and the Imagined Community of Nations,” *Diaspora: a Journal of Transnational Studies* 3, no.1 (1993): 61.

<sup>40</sup> Emma Haddad, “The Refugee: Forging National Identities,” *Studies in Ethnicity and Nationalism* 2, no.2 (2002): 24.

“power-knowledge networks of discourses.”<sup>41</sup> Thus the citizen becomes subject to the social, political and economic system of the nation state. Foucault’s theory highlights the power dynamics involved with the nation-citizen dichotomy.

Furthermore, I conceptualize a citizen as it links to concepts of membership and belonging (and not belonging) to a state. I utilize Haddad’s conceptualization:

Nationality and citizenship could not have taken such a strong hold on members of each political space without the simultaneous invention of the foreigner: ‘henceforth citizen and foreigner would be correlative, mutually exclusive, exhaustive categories....In other words the ‘citizen’ could not have emerged without the surfacing of the ‘foreigner’ at the same time: the creation of the identity of the foreigner was vital in establishing the citizen-nation-state hierarchy.<sup>42</sup>

Mamdani referred to the Rwandan genocide as a “testimony to the crisis of citizenship in postcolonial Africa.”<sup>43</sup> Moreover, in his landmark study on Rwanda’s citizenship and political identities, Mamdani argued that “the internal pressure in Rwanda is now joined to a regional dynamic as two diasporas – one Hutu, the other Tutsi-confront each other in a life-and-death encounter. Both diasporas are animated, not simply by the cycle of revenge in Rwanda but also by the common regional inheritance that has been translated into a mode of citizenship that denies full citizenship to residents it brands as ethnic strangers.”<sup>44</sup> Thus, understanding political identities must be situated in the nation-state context, as well as in the modes of “insiders and outsiders.” These concepts of “belonging” set the stage for understanding diaspora identities, further complicating the dynamics of a diaspora. Citizenship discourse in Rwanda has been a recurring theme throughout Rwanda’s history, including during decolonization, genocide propaganda, and finally post-genocide.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> O’Connor, “Repatriation, 6.

<sup>42</sup> Haddad, *The Refugee: Forging National Identities*, 22.

<sup>43</sup> Mamdani, *When Victims Become Killers*, 39.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, 280.

<sup>45</sup> Buckley-zistal, “Dividing and Uniting.”

### 3.2.2 Defining Identity

Finally, at the core of this thesis is the concept of identity, which links together all the aforementioned concepts. Identity is central to understanding post-genocide politics in Rwanda. Though many scholars have discussed and argued on the prevailing power of ethnicity as the key identifier in Rwanda, it is suffice to say that the simplistic dichotomy of Hutu or Tutsi is no longer reflective of identities in Rwanda.<sup>46</sup> Instead, I emphasize the following concepts because it is useful for this thesis to understand the process of constructing, managing, and politicizing identity from a state power dynamic.

Identity construction refers to the process of “making people” who have a sense of belonging. It is a “productive” concept, always shifting in different contexts and reflects common lived and historical experiences.<sup>47</sup> With regard to diaspora identities specifically, Stuart Hall, a scholar on identity politics amid diaspora, migration and transnationalism qualifies that “diaspora identities are not confined to the nation state, but inherently hybrid in character.”<sup>48</sup> He states that “diaspora identities are those which are constantly producing and reproducing themselves anew, through transformation and difference.”<sup>49</sup> Furthermore, diasporic identity is also characterized by a shared history and common history, but identities fundamentally are given to “differentiate [the] ways people are positioned and how they are positioned within the narratives of the past.”<sup>50</sup>

For this study, the notion of identity is key in the context of the diaspora because movement of people in and out of Rwanda, coupled with the highly politicized nation building project, make for a very complicated and dynamic relationship. Because identities are fluid and complex, they rarely operate solely through one type of identity.<sup>51</sup> The case of Rwanda exhibits this, as identities in Rwanda are shaped by ethnicity, lived experiences, territory, class, and a myriad of others characteristics

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<sup>46</sup> Some authors who argue that identity politics in Rwanda have been examined in too simplistic ethnic categories include: Helen Hintjens, Cori Wielenga, Lars Waldorf, and Andrea Purdekova.

<sup>47</sup> Caroline Brettell and Carolyn Sargent “Migration, Identity and Citizenship,” *American Behavior Scientist* 50, no. 1 (2006):3.

<sup>48</sup> Stuart Hall, “Cultural Identity and Diaspora,” in *Identity: Community, Culture, Difference*, edited Jonathan Rutherford, 222-237. London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1990.

<sup>49</sup> Hall, “Cultural Identity and Diaspora,” 235.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid.

<sup>51</sup> Paige Arthur, “Introduction: Identities in Transition”, in *Identities in Transition: Challenges for Transitional Justice in Divided Societies*, edited by Paige Arthur, 1-17. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011.

Adamson describes this dynamic relationship:

The institutionalizing of links between a state and its diaspora leads to a change in both the discourses and practices that define membership and belonging in the state. National identity remains salient and is still linked symbolically to a specific territory, but the *practices, strategies and policies* by which state elites link identity and territory are themselves transnational and deterritorialized.<sup>52</sup>

Thus, the changing relationship between the state and its diaspora is critical to understanding how these identities became politicized in Rwanda. This thesis links identity to these concepts by addressing how the diverse lived experiences affected Rwandans' self-identity. The concepts of "nation" and "citizen" become linked to identity through experiences that define who is a citizen in the "new" Rwandan nation, and who is not. This thesis also explores the relationship between self-identity and state-defined identity, as many instances show that there a disconnect between the state and citizen. The implications of these differences are evident in how policy-makers came to politicize these identities.

Examining how the concept of identity is linked to these terms is helpful for the discussion on diaspora politics and nation building in Rwanda because it provides a framework for interpreting the dynamic state-citizen and citizen-citizen relationships, which will be discussed Chapter Six as I examine the RPF's strategy for recategorizing political identities. In order to understand their strategy, I will first provide a historical overview of Rwanda's diaspora, as well as RPF origins.

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<sup>52</sup> Fiona Adamson and Madeleine Demetriou, "Remapping the Boundaries of 'State' and 'National Identity': Incorporating Diasporas into IR Theorizing, *European Journal of International Relations* Vol. 13(4): 489–526, 2007, 502.

## Chapter 4: Historical Overview

This chapter provides a brief historical overview of important dimensions in Rwanda's history that are useful for understanding contemporary Rwandan politics. This chapter has two aims: first, to provide an overview of identity politics and diaspora dynamics in Rwanda and second, to situate the origins of the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) in this context. In doing so, this chapter illustrates how identities and histories of mobilities have always been salient in Rwanda, and is still relevant in post-genocide politics.

### 4.1 Historical Dimensions of the Rwandan Diaspora

#### 4.1.1 Rwanda's History of Mobility and Mass Displacement

When discussing mass displacement in Rwanda, mass movement caused from the genocide comes to mind. But the diasporic history of Rwanda is quite complex; people in Rwanda have moved frequently for varied reasons throughout Rwanda's history. Likewise, the concept of what Rwandans considered "home" varied.<sup>53</sup> Yet, "coming home" is still significant, as historian David Newbury described: "a history of mobility in the region is useful for contextualizing our understanding of the processes involved, for the relatively recent presence of boundaries – defining identity in national terms – had imparted a particular character to the changing concept of "coming home."<sup>54</sup>

In precolonial Rwanda, the history of mass movement was very different than movement during colonization. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, prior to the colonization period, being "Rwandan" was not defined by fixed geographical space only. Instead, Newbury argued it was based more on culture, social networks and where one could have productive labor. However, this began to change with the start of the colonial period in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, where being Rwandan was identified with geographic space and "boundaries of the colonial state."<sup>55</sup>

Rwandans who left during the early 20<sup>th</sup> century included economic migrants who sought

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<sup>53</sup> Newbury, "Returning Refugees," 254.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid., 256.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid., 263-265.

opportunities elsewhere. For example, there were at least 450,000 Rwandans who had moved to the Belgian Congo from the 1920s and stayed there until independence in Rwanda for economic opportunities. Additionally, around 700,000 Rwandans had moved to Uganda from the 1920s to the 1950s for economic reasons. Yet, it was the mass displacement sparked by Rwanda's decolonization struggle that marked a clear shift in Rwanda's diasporic history.<sup>56</sup>

Many of the conflict-driven diaspora members who left Rwanda during the 1960s did not know that they would live in exile for almost 30 years. These people who left came to have many different experiences that being a "Rwandan refugee" in the Great Lakes region could mean many different things. While some refugees found successes while living abroad, through means of working and other ways, for the most part these exiled Rwandans faced precarious and traumatic experiences. There were "widows and families with a single female parent, lone young adults, people left behind in the camps, and groups in conflict situations with the local populations."<sup>57</sup>

The exiled Tutsi remained in touch with each other; they organized themselves into social clubs and organizations like the Rwandese Canadian Cultural Association in Ontario. These groups spanned all over, including: Quebec, Ontario, Belgium, Germany, Bujumura, New York, Los Angeles, Washington DC, Nairobi, Lome, Dakar and Brazaville. They were very diverse and widespread, "reflecting the diversification of the diaspora."<sup>58</sup> They would organize different events, and even published cultural and political newspapers and magazines. What was interesting of this context though, as Prunier argued, was that in some ways the exiled Rwandan Tutsis became closer than they were while living inside Rwanda. This was because in this new context outside of the country, some previously held social barriers did not exist.<sup>59</sup> This, I would argue, factors in to the formation of diaspora identities that would be formed, to be explored in the subsequent chapter.

This strong sense of attachment to their home country was especially true of the exiles who were forced to leave in the 1950s and 1960s and remained a key characteristic in their diaspora

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<sup>56</sup> Prunier, *The Rwanda Crisis*, 63.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid., 66.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid., 65-6.

identities. Over time, the notion of an “idealized Rwanda”<sup>60</sup> became an important part of this diaspora’s identity, over years of being in exile.<sup>61</sup> As Lyons, a scholar on diaspora studies, put it: “The ‘old country’ is often romanticized and past glories and grievances kept alive in an ‘allegiance to the land of memories’ as a way of asserting continued belonging.”<sup>62</sup> After living in the diaspora for so many years, memories of their “home country” gradually and eventually turned into memories of a “mythical country.” This was particularly true for the younger children who grew up in exile or who left Rwanda when they were young. Because their experiences of living in the diaspora were quite difficult in many cases, Rwandans constructed a version of the home they had left behind, and Rwanda was known to be the “land of milk and honey.”<sup>63</sup>

The Rwandans abroad held on to this strong image and it was prominent in their mindset – their return home. Prunier said: “They ignored the fact that their eventual return would not be as ideal; economic problems link with their eventual return, such as overpopulation, overgrazing or soil erosion, were dismissed as Kigali regime propaganda.”<sup>64</sup> Thus, for those living in the diaspora, the concept of returning home remained a salient factor that motivated them to want to come home. This was especially true for the diaspora community in Uganda, where the biggest portion of people who left went to live.<sup>65</sup> Of course, as we shall see in the next chapter, this was not the Rwanda home that they would return to. Nonetheless, as this shared notion of returning to the land of milk and honey was a key factor in setting the scene for forming a collective diasporic identity, particularly in Uganda, as we will see in the next chapter.

#### 4.1.2 A Historical Look at Identity Politics in Rwanda

“Diaspora identities” emerged from the shared experiences of Rwandans forced out of their home country to build new lives abroad for many years in these diaspora communities. From this shared living experienced came a common identity based on the mutual sense of attachment and solidarity to the idea of their home country. Moreover, being part of a specifically conflict-generated diaspora tends to heighten this sense of solidarity, and thus networks are formed to

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<sup>60</sup> Newbury, in assessing patterns of “returning home” to Rwanda, describes this notion as an “idealized vision of ‘home;’” Newbury, “Returning Refugees,” 270.

<sup>61</sup> Prunier, *The Rwanda Crisis*, 64.

<sup>62</sup> Lyons, “Engaging Diaspora,” 9.

<sup>63</sup> Prunier, *The Rwanda Crisis*, 66.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, 67.

<sup>65</sup> Newbury, “Returning Refugees,” 270.



propagate this shared identity and keep “nationalist hopes alive from abroad.”<sup>66</sup> In addition to sharing the idealized vision of their home to return to, organizing into associations and groups throughout the diaspora is a key indicator of this shared attachment to home. In the Rwandan context, diaspora and diaspora identities cannot be understood without looking at ethnicity. Ethnicity and race as forms of identity are dominant concepts that form Rwandan identity. The notions of ethnicity and race play key roles in the patterns of Rwandan’s diasporic history. It remains salient in the formation of diasporic identities amongst the diaspora during and after decolonization.

First, let us look at genocide and the historical dimensions of ethnicity, as relevant to Rwanda, with a brief discussion on the definition and conceptualization of “ethnicity.” These definitions and explanations are contested amongst scholars. While Nigel Eltringham brings up the question of whether or not “ethnicity” is even a viable concept to discuss, he argues that ultimately, in these situations, ethnicity remains salient and the concept of ethnicity must be studied to understand how actors involved use this “notion of ethnic distinction.” Thus, despite the convoluted nature of the term ethnicity, it is highly relevant to understanding Rwanda’s complex social context and history, particularly for understanding the role of ethnic divisions in the 1994 genocide. When studying the Rwandan genocide, the general consensus is that the events of 1994 was a pre-planned, state-sponsored genocide in which the “enemy within” was defined by racial terms based on the Hamitic race of Tutsi.<sup>67</sup>

When historians Catherine and David Newbury analyzed the historical relevance of ethnicity in Rwanda, they examined the two common views. One is based on the assumption that “ethnic identities have unchanging cultural and biological traits and that therefore Hutu and Tutsi will always be opposed to each other.” The second one is that before the arrival of colonial powers, Rwanda was a society without ethnicities and that today’s ethnic identities were invented by European politics. The Newburys disagree with both views and instead observed that it is not

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<sup>66</sup> Lyons, “Engaging Diaspora,” 4-7.

<sup>67</sup> Helen Hintjens, “When Identity Becomes a Knife: Reflecting on the Genocide in Rwanda.” *Ethnicities* 1, no.1 (2001): 26.

simply historical components that make ethnicity important, but how it has been used politically.<sup>68</sup>

The ethnic realities of Rwanda are very complicated, but its core is rooted in politics, so it must be understood and examined in that space. In the Rwandan context, Hutu and Tutsi have come to mean different things at different points in time in Rwanda, depending on social and political contexts and space. These terms have meanings that change diachronically (across time) and synchronically (at a point in time).<sup>69</sup> Historically, the precolonial Rwandan kingdom was divided into a dozen clans, which included Hutu, Tutsi, and Twa, with Hutu constituting around 84 percent of the population. Differences between the groups were seen more so as class distinctions, rather than ethnic distinctions.<sup>70</sup> They spoke the same languages, shared the same religion and culture. Before colonial influence, these identities were fairly flexible and fluid. The idea that “Hutu” and “Tutsi” were different tribes or different ethnic groups has been disputed. Instead, it is generally believed that the term “Tutsi” referred to those associated with power, while “Hutu” was a “transethnic identity of subjects.”<sup>71</sup> Though it did not happen often, Hutu could “become” Tutsi, and vice versa. This was generally the case until the mid-1800s, when one of the last kings of Rwanda, Rwabugiri, solidified identities to consolidate the kingdom. Until colonialism, clan and lineage thereafter became more important identifiers.<sup>72</sup> However, with colonization, these distinctions became highly politicized.<sup>73</sup> These identities turned into “rigid ethnic or ‘racial’ interpretation of such identity groups.”<sup>74</sup> Under German and Belgian colonial masters, identity documents were given out to label whether each person was a Hutu or Tutsi.<sup>75</sup>

During this time, the Hamitic Hypothesis also played a critical role in influencing “hardened ethnic boundaries.” Essentially a “racial, social and evolutionary” ideology, it classified Tutsis as a superior, racial class. The Hamitic Myth espoused the idea that Tutsis were the superior “Caucasian” race who came from north-eastern Africa and, moreover, were “responsible for

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<sup>68</sup> Buckley-Zistal, “Dividing and Uniting,” 104.

<sup>69</sup> Nigel Eltringham, *Accounting for Horror: Post-Genocide Debates in Rwanda* (London: Pluto Press, 2004), 13.

<sup>70</sup> Colin Waugh. *Paul Kagame and Rwanda: Power, Genocide and the Rwandan Patriotic Front* (Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland & Company, 2004), 226. .

<sup>71</sup> Wielenga, “Lived Identities,” 126.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid., 126.

<sup>73</sup> Helen Hintjens, “Explaining the 1994 Genocide in Rwanda,” *The Journal of Modern African Studies* 37, no. 2 (1999): 247.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid., 250.

<sup>75</sup> Newbury, “Returning Refugees,” 261.

civilization in East and Central Africa.<sup>76</sup> This Hamitic myth was profound and widely believed. “Scholars” helped espouse these racial perceptions by legitimizing it. For example, Alexis Kagame was known as the “native Rwandese intellectual.”<sup>77</sup> His works utilized, incorporated, and legitimized these racial ideas for explaining aristocratic Tutsi rule. Kagame’s works were widely read by Tutsi intellectuals. Moreover, the Hamitic myth reached the Hutu masses. Thus, as Eltringham argued, social distinction in colonial Rwanda was racially constructed and did not form to the current multidimensional understanding of ethnicity.<sup>78</sup> These ethnic and racial distinctions remained salient and relevant in the development of Rwanda diaspora identity in Uganda.

#### 4.1.3 Decolonization: a Shift in Identities

Decolonization was a pivotal point in Rwanda’s history, signifying a drastic shift not only in political structure, but in identity. As Hintjens explained, “At this time, class and ‘race’ identity fused into a single, exclusionary paradigm of Rwandan nationality and citizenship.”<sup>79</sup> During this transition, there was the shift from colonial ideologies of race. Simultaneously, with independence, movements between countries further polarized identities.<sup>80</sup>

During the decolonization struggles in Rwanda of the late 1950s and early 1960s, thousands of Rwandans fled the country amidst a tumultuous political situation. From 1959 to 1964, and for sporadic periods after that, there was a continuous stream of Rwandan Tutsis who fled to exile during the so-called “Hutu Revolution.” Many emigrants fled on foot to refugee camps in Uganda.<sup>81</sup> This displacement was starkly different than that of the past, as these Rwandans who left were “classic refugees”: they were forced to leave Rwanda for political reasons.<sup>82</sup> During this period of decolonization, refugees left in waves, as there were two stages. The first wave came with the “Revolution” of 1959. During this stage, the group “sought to overthrow the monarchy and to drive out members of the administrative class, those tied directly to the

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<sup>76</sup> Eltringham, *Accounting for Horror*, 16.

<sup>77</sup> Prunier, *The Rwanda Crisis*, 37.

<sup>78</sup> Eltringham, *Accounting for Horror*, 19.

<sup>79</sup> Hintjens, “When Identity Becomes a Knife,” 32.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*, 33.

<sup>81</sup> Prunier, *The Rwanda Crisis*, 53.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*, 61.

implementation of colonial policy.”<sup>83</sup> The Hutu overthrew the Tutsi ruling class, killing an estimated ten thousand and producing the first several exoduses following large massacres.

Then, the second stage of the revolution occurred in 1963-1964, which started from the refugee community itself as they tried to fight back. Tutsi exiles, mostly young members of exiled families, launched attacks from abroad, but it was poorly planned. The government launched attacks in retaliation and repression, and around 10,000-14,000 Tutsis and Tutsi politicians living in Rwanda were executed. The invasions stopped as the second round of Rwandans fled the country. There would be no more organized and militarized attempt to go back home until the formation of the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) in the 1980s.<sup>84</sup>

Thus, this was Rwanda’s first conflict-generated diaspora, the first exodus of people leaving that were identity-motivated, unlike the economic migrants of early mass movements. The Rwandans who left the country during the late 1950s and early 1960s were “classic refugees” because they were forced to leave Rwanda for political reasons. A key characteristic of these refugees, however, was that they had a strong identity with Rwanda, and they maintained this identity and sought to return home.<sup>85</sup> By 1962, there were already around 120,000 refugees outside Rwanda.<sup>86</sup>

The approximate number that people have come to agree on is 600,000-700,000.<sup>87</sup> This is the number of refugees and children who left Rwanda because of political persecution between 1959 and 1973 and who still identified themselves as ‘refugees’ in the 1990.<sup>88</sup> These communities of refugees in exile went to regional bordering countries like the Congo, Kenya, Burundi and Uganda.

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<sup>83</sup> Newbury, “Returning Refugees,” 272.

<sup>84</sup> Prunier, *The Rwanda Crisis*, 56.

<sup>85</sup> Newbury, “Returning Refugees,” 270.

<sup>86</sup> Prunier, *The Rwanda Crisis*, 61.

<sup>87</sup> Prunier added: “Nobody will ever agree on those numbers because it represents too much of a political ammunition store;” Prunier, *The Rwanda Crisis*, 63.

<sup>88</sup> Prunier, *The Rwanda Crisis*, 63.

## 4.2 Origins of the Rwandan Patriotic Front in Uganda: Identity Politics in Exile

### 4.2.1 Formation of the Rwandan Patriotic Front

The origins of the RPF are important to understand because it guides their ideology and governing methods in the post-genocide period, as I will argue. As Hall noted on diaspora identities: “These hybrid identities are formed through displacement, the transnational experiences and both the host and home countries.”<sup>89</sup> This could not be truer for the context of Rwandans in Uganda, who had built their lives in a politically volatile host country. After the fall of Idi Amin, and Milton Obote’s second government was instated in 1981, the political climate remained tense and violent.<sup>90</sup> The Tutsi refugees living in Uganda faced political repression and violence in the early 1980s in Obote’s Uganda. The RPF’s roots began in this political context, as the Rwandan refugees in Uganda created the Rwandese Refugee Welfare Foundation in 1979 to help those Rwandan refugees who had been politically repressed. In 1980, this organization renamed itself the Rwandese Alliance for National Unity (RANU); they became more politically militant and initiated discussions on returning back to Rwanda.<sup>91</sup>

A turning point for the refugees living in Uganda occurred in 1982, with government-sponsored attacks on refugee camps targeting Rwandan Tutsis. Additionally, in November of that year Rwanda closed its borders, denying Rwandans re-entry to the country. As Newbury noted, these Rwandans were “neither refugees nor returnees.”<sup>92</sup> This expulsion had significant repercussions throughout the refugee diaspora. Prunier described:

Many of the young men, like Paul Kagame, felt that Rwanda was an old story, their parent’s story, and that they were now Ugandans. And then they suddenly discovered that people among whom they had lived for thirty years were treating them as hated and despised foreigners. The shock was tremendous.<sup>93</sup>

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<sup>89</sup> Hall, “Cultural Identity.”

<sup>90</sup> Newbury, “Returning Refugee,” 275.

<sup>91</sup> Prunier, *The Rwanda Crisis*, 67.

<sup>92</sup> Newbury, “Returning Refugee,” 275.

<sup>93</sup> Prunier, *The Rwanda Crisis*, 67-70.

Eager to fight Obote's hostile regime, Rwandans joined in when a popular resistance movement led by Yoweri Museveni organized to fight the Obote regime. Amongst them was Kagame, who would later play a critical role in the Rwandese exile political movement. Many young Rwandan men joined Museveni's guerilla forces and joined in on the fighting. When Museveni's National Resistance Army (NRA) took Kampala in January 1986, 3,000 of its 14,000 fighters were from Rwanda. After Museveni came to power, however, a gradually increasing number of Ugandans expressed hostility toward the Rwandan presence in the NRA regime, especially as Rwandans held military positions and became more involved in the economy. Rwandans from the diaspora all over the world started moving to Uganda. As one woman who moved from Belgium to take a well-paying government job stated: "Now Uganda belongs to us."<sup>94</sup>

This put pressure on President Museveni, who began to feel like the government's relations with the Rwandans were more of a liability.<sup>95</sup> Relations between the Ugandan government and the Rwandan Tutsi exiles became more strained; promotions in the army stopped and promises of naturalization were not kept. By the end of the 1980s, almost 30 years after the first wave, the refugee population stood at 550,000 according to the UNHCR figures, and up to almost a million according to some Tutsi; 350,000 lived in Uganda alone.<sup>96</sup> This large population truly felt that their time of thirty years in exile in Uganda were over. As Van Der Meeren put it:

Fearing also for their own career security as stateless persons, without citizenship rights and exposed to jealousy among their hosts, they took up the issue of the refugees' inalienable right to repatriation and the responsibility of Rwanda to solve the problems of its citizens in exile.<sup>97</sup>

This determination had important political consequences. In 1987 RANU turned itself into the Rwandese Patriotic front, "an offensive political organization dedicated to the return of exiles to Rwanda, by force if necessary." There was always talk amongst the Ugandan exile of someday

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<sup>94</sup> Prunier, *The Rwanda Crisis*, 72.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid.

<sup>96</sup> Howard Adelman and Elazar Barkan, *No Return No Refuge: Rites and Rights in Minority Repatriation*. Columbia: Columbia University Press, 2011.

<sup>97</sup> Rachel Van Der Meeren, "Three Decades in Exile: Rwandan Refugees 1960-1990," *Journal of Refugee Studies* 9, no. 3 (1996): 252-267.

returning back to Rwanda, but it was not until this point, with the formation of the RPF, that there were serious and concerted efforts and a militarized component.<sup>98</sup>

It was this context that would eventually form the beginnings of the four year civil war, launched in October 1990 when the RPF attacked Rwanda. The RPF and Rwandan government would eventually go through negotiations leading to the Arusha Accords of 1993. The Arusha Accords, encouraged by the international community, stipulated that there would be provisions for: a ceasefire, the make-up of a transitional government, a reconfiguration of the armed forces, and the return of refugees.”<sup>99</sup> As we now know, the negotiations stipulated by the Accords were interrupted; a missile fired to President Habyarimana, killing the president, sparked the start of 100 days of genocide.<sup>100</sup>

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<sup>98</sup> Prunier, *The Rwanda Crisis*, 73.

<sup>99</sup> Newbury, “Returning Refugees,” 276.

<sup>100</sup> While the events of the genocide are critical to Rwanda’s history, it has been discussed at great length in other works. For the purpose of this thesis, the genocide will not be addressed in detail.

#### 4.2.2 The RPF as a “Victim Diaspora” Understanding the RPF Identity and Ideologies

Given the swift change in power in post-genocide Rwanda, the country was left in quite a precarious and uncertain situation while the government was struggling to rebuild the country.

I argue that a lot of these tensions and divisiveness came from identity-based perceptions that permeated into politics. Exploring political identities during this transition period is key to understanding the RPF. First, it is necessary to explore the historical identity of the RPF.

Purdekova argued that one reason why Rwanda poses a unique case study is because the victors of the war were themselves returning from exiles. This characteristic is, I would argue, a defining trait that is crucial to understanding the RPF’s ideology and self-identity.<sup>101</sup>

For those elite Tutsis in power who had been in exile abroad, their historical identities associated with growing up in the diaspora had significant implications on their self-perceptions. These people saw themselves as victims, as they grew up in exile and were raised in families who were forced out of Rwanda because of political violence, no doubt experiencing mass trauma. Thus, a large part of the RPF’s ideology was a shared identity of being part of, and coming from, a “victim diaspora.”<sup>102</sup> This identity plays a significant part in shaping the RPF’s narrative and nationalist script of rebuilding the nation. Thus Cohen’s term of a “victim diaspora” is fitting to describe the 1959 Tutsi diaspora.<sup>103</sup>

Moreover, members of the RPF saw themselves as not only victims, but also as saviors who liberated the nation. President Kagame stressed the “hero status” of the RPF, because of its role in stopping the genocide when the international community stood by and did nothing.<sup>104</sup> Many members of the government elite had a collective identity based on shared lived experience. This was especially true of the RPF elite, who had fought together from abroad and came into the country as the victorious party. As Phil Clark describes, the RPF’s shared experience born of the

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<sup>101</sup> Andrea Purdekova, “Repatriation and Reconciliation in Divided Societies: The Case of Rwanda’s ‘Ingando.’” Working Paper No. 43 from the University of Oxford Refugee Studies Centre, 2008: 7.

<sup>102</sup> Cohen talks about victim diaspora, but Helen Hintjens refers to “victim diasporic nationalism” to describe the RPF identity since taking power in 1994.

<sup>103</sup> Turner, “Staging the Rwandan Diaspora,” 269.

<sup>104</sup> Susan Thompson, “Rwanda’s National Unity and Reconciliation Program,” *E-International News*, May 1, 2014, accessed January 5, 2016, <http://www.e-ir.info/2014/05/01/rwandas-national-unity-and-reconciliation-program/>.



diaspora “instilled a deep sense of purpose and resolve, a collective identity forged through conflict, and an ethos of self-reliance that remains one of the RPF’s defining features.”<sup>105</sup>

Moreover, the RPF’s experience of living in exile helped shape their ideologies and would later play into their post-genocide governance and policies. While living in the diaspora, the RPF was ideologically “Pan-Africanist” and trained its members in African politics, history and philosophy. Talk of ethnic identity was forbidden; instead, patriotism and unity were emphasized. Therefore, for the most part, RPF members saw themselves as being African first, and then Rwandese, but not as “Tutsi.”<sup>106</sup> As such, the RPF’s thoughts on nationalism and how to build a nation were “imported” and “brewed in exile.”<sup>107</sup> There are important and lasting implications of this rhetoric, in terms of how the RPF wanted to be viewed. It guided the RPF’s governance and state building policies and swift consolidation of power, and was used as part of their rhetoric to legitimize their power in the eyes of the international community as well as their fellow Rwandans.

The fact that the RPF had this shared idea of being victims themselves, and came into the country as saviors, is significant for two reasons. First, the RPF’s identity linked with victimhood was not limited to the RPF. It also spread to the people associated with them: the primarily Tutsi refugees from the diaspora returning from years in exile. The returnees came back to a country alongside the victors. Many saw the RPF as “their army” and thus shared in the RPF’s “victor’s attitude.”<sup>108</sup> Second, this collective identity came to exacerbate tensions amongst the people in Rwanda, especially when the country had to deal with a massive amount of returnees in the years following the end of the genocide, further complicating the social and political landscape. The government’s shared identity was not something entirely welcomed by everyone, and it was a point of contention amid the complicated and uncertain context with the RPF’s takeover of power.

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<sup>105</sup> Phil Clark, “After Genocide: Democracy in Rwanda, 20 years on.” *Juncture* 20, no. 04 (2014): 308-311, accessed January 2, 2016, <http://www.ippr.org/juncture/after-genocide-democracy-in-rwanda-20-years-on>.

<sup>106</sup> Mamdani, *When Victims Become Killers*, 165; Wielenga, “Lived Identities,” 6.

<sup>107</sup> Purdekova, “Repatriation and Reconciliation,” 4.

<sup>108</sup> Burnet, “Whose Genocide,” 83.

## Chapter 5: Post-genocide Transition: Creating the “New Rwanda”

During the immediate post-genocide period, the nation struggled to rebuild after such extreme violence in the wave of the devastating genocide. This chapter provides the context in which the RPF came to power, and the complex socio-political dynamics of the immediate post-genocide period when Rwandans were simultaneously leaving and entering the country. This chapter contextualizes the nation building project of the RPF in a post conflict state where there was a drastic reorganization of power, and tensions amongst groups of Rwandans. The chapter concludes by exploring the context in which a nation building process was much needed in Rwanda.

### 5.1 Mass Movement in and out of Rwanda: Returnees and Exodus

When the RPF finally seized the capital of Kigali in July 1994 and effectively ended the genocide, there was immediate mass movement of people coming in and out of the country. First, there was the return of Rwandans from the diaspora. 700,000 former exiles returned to the country. The return of these “fifty-niners”<sup>109</sup> was very chaotic; it was the biggest recorded repatriation in the world.<sup>110</sup> These “old caseload returnees” comprised of mostly Tutsi who had gone into exile in the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s, and had lived in the diaspora for many years. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) referred to them as “old caseload refugees.”

This massive return home would make for a tumultuous and complicated social landscape as people who have lived in exile either for decades, or as refugees during the genocidal warfare, were to enter in the country again. As Purdekova noted: “Exile can lead both to distancing from homeland, and to longing and re-imagining of home and nation. All of these factors determine the experience of return and integration, and also might signal a most complex

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<sup>109</sup> Philip Gourevitch, *We Wish to Inform You That Tomorrow We Will Be Killed with Our Families: Stories from Rwanda* (New York: Picador 1998), 232.

<sup>110</sup> O'Connor, “Repatriation,” 10.

transformation of conflict.”<sup>111</sup> In Rwanda, the swift takeover by the RPF, after years of being in exile, would drastically change the makeup of the country.

Newbury explained that these former exiles who returned at the end of the genocide returned “jubilantly and triumphantly” to their homeland after thirty years in exile.<sup>112</sup> Under this premise of what they thought they would have when they returned home, Rwanda seemed to be a dream finally realized. However, the reality of the situation of their “home” was to be a surprising awakening. The reality of the context to which they returned “home” was terrible. It was to a country that had gone through “trauma beyond description.”<sup>113</sup> After all, almost two million people had been killed in a hundred days. As one survivor described returning to Kigali, “the place smelled of death.”<sup>114</sup>

Not only were the exiles returning to a place where people were beyond traumatized, the actual landscape they returned to was beyond shattered. The capital was in ruins; there was no money in government, no electric phones or water lines, and dead bodies in latrines and wells. The hospitals were not in any working order. Under these circumstances, it is hard to imagine why one would want to return home; as Gourevitch described:

One might suppose that the dream of return would have lost some of its allure for the Tutsi of the Rwandan diaspora; that people who sat in safe homes abroad, receiving the news of the wholesale slaughter of their parents and siblings...would reckon their prospects for a natural death in exile and stay there. One might suppose that a simple desire to not go mad would inspire such people to renounce forever any hope of again calling Rwanda “home.” Instead, the exiles began rushing back to Rwanda even before the blood had dried.<sup>115</sup>

Thus for all these returning Rwandans, they returned to a home very different from what they had imagined.<sup>116</sup>

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<sup>111</sup> Purdekova, “Repatriation and Reconciliation,” 9.

<sup>112</sup> Newbury, “Returning Refugees,” 277.

<sup>113</sup> Ibid.

<sup>114</sup> Gourevitch, *We Wish to Inform You*, 227.

<sup>115</sup> Ibid., 230.

<sup>116</sup> Newbury, “Returning Refugees,” 278.

Furthermore, the exiles were returning to a country that was, to some degree, “emptied of people,” as many were internally displaced, or fleeing into exile simultaneously.<sup>117</sup> In a 24 –hour period on April 29 1994, it was estimated that 250,000 people left Rwanda over the bridge at Rusumo Falls in the southeastern corner of the country. As Newbury described, the exodus in 1994 was of great magnitude: “this was the most abrupt, massive refugee movement of this scale ever known.”<sup>118</sup> By late August of 1994 it was estimated that over two million Rwandans, mostly Hutus, had fled and sought refuge in neighboring countries, including: 1.2 million in Zaire, 580,000 in Tanzania, 270,000 in Burundi and 10,000 in Uganda. But, most of the Rwandans who fled were fleeing not only to escape the potential for renewed violence but also out of fear of revenge killings with the ensuing RPF takeover.<sup>119</sup>

The nature of this mass exodus was starkly different than that of the 1950s and 1960s. Unlike that earlier refugee community, these refugees often did not have the resources or bureaucratic skills, and did not have regional and or international support networks.<sup>120</sup> These refugees fled on foot with only the belongings they could carry, walking for weeks. In many instances they were separated from their family members, and many would die from hunger, epidemic disease, and exhaustion. They lived in refugee camps, and were often victimized by authorities of the host countries. These camps were highly politicized and militarized. They were treated collectively as a “pariah population,” clearly separate from the local people and were never absorbed into the local population.<sup>121</sup>

Moreover, divisive identities were challenging to nation building. Collective identities defined the government, but also reached Rwandans as well, highlighting that divisive factions continued to develop since 1994. As Purdekova put it: “After the genocide, Rwanda is even more diverse, but more importantly, differently divided than before. The pure disruptive force of genocide, the diverse experiences of it, the mass returns from various countries of exiles, and the changed power structure all point to new constituencies and new inequalities that have to be taken into

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<sup>117</sup> Newbury, “Returning Refugees,” 278.

<sup>118</sup> Ibid., 258.

<sup>119</sup> *The State of the World's Refugees: Rwandan Genocide and Its Aftermath*. Report. The State of The World's Refugees 2000: Fifty Years of Humanitarian Action ed. New York City: United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, 2000,2.

<sup>120</sup> Newbury, “Returning Refugees,” 278.

<sup>121</sup> Ibid.

account.”<sup>122</sup> These tensions were based on struggles of legitimacy and citizenship, which were linked to mobility-based identities.

Rwandans held many different opinions and fears, rooted in not only historical identities but also diverse lived experiences, particularly that of the horrors of the genocide. Like other post conflict contexts, the transition period in Rwanda was very complicated and the transitional government faced the enormous task of rebuilding the nation. This social context must be noted as an important departure point for understand the nature of post genocide politics in Rwanda.

A lot of these tensions were because of the precarious situation with more mass movement. Just as it was in the immediate post-genocide period, the return of thousands of Rwandans from abroad would again uproot and add increased tensions to the social context of Rwanda. It was under this context of mass movement of Rwandans coming in and leaving that the RPF assumed power in Rwanda, and thus began its grand project of nation building.

## **5.2 Consolidation of RPF Power**

While the end of the genocide brought back Rwandan exiles from Burundi, Congo and such neighboring countries, the most powerful and influential group returning was that of the exiles from the Ugandan diaspora. It was this group that primarily made up the RPF, whose victory of taking over the capital Kigali instituted a swift change in power.<sup>123</sup>

The RPF return officially disbanded the genocide government and established the new transitional government, the Government of National Unity in July 1994. It sought to reaffirm the ideals set forth by the Arusha Accords of 1993 and resume the country’s goal of power sharing.<sup>124</sup> Pasteur Bizimungu, a Hutu who had joined the RPF in Uganda, became the first president, with Paul Kagame as the vice president.

When the RPF assumed power, it initially took certain steps to show its commitment to continue with what the Arusha Accords started. On July 19, the new government created the Government

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<sup>122</sup> Purdekova, “Beyond De-ethnicisation,” 9.

<sup>123</sup> O’Connor, “Repatriation,” 11.

<sup>124</sup> Reyntjens, “Rwanda, Ten Years,” 1105.

of National Unity.<sup>125</sup> Two political parties, the *Mouvement Révolutionnaire National pour le Développement* (MRND) and *Coalition pour la Défense de la République* (CDR), were banned for their “leading role in the genocide.” The government reaffirmed its commitment to power sharing. As determined by the Arusha accord, a Hutu from the MDR, Faustin Twagiramungu became prime minister.<sup>126</sup> The transitional government faced a mammoth task of rebuilding the country; there was not even a dollar or a Rwandan franc left in the treasury, as Gourevitch described.<sup>127</sup> The government had to prioritize security, build an army, address much needed transitional justice measures -- all amidst the chaotic mass return and exile of Rwandans in and out of the country.<sup>128</sup> The RPF’s control of the capital, takeover of government, and pushing out the *genocidaires* came as a great relief to many. The RPF’s victory marked the end to the horrific genocide. With the end of the genocide, many were relieved and expected that good governance, stability, democracy and peace would finally come to Rwanda.<sup>129</sup>

Others, however, were uncertain of what would happen in the post-genocide period with the returning Tutsi refugees from Uganda suddenly controlling government, as they ended up forming the elite RPF class. Rwandans perceived this as a “Tutsification” of power.<sup>130</sup> They feared there would be revenge, retribution, and “reversal of the status quo” with Tutsis now being in control.<sup>131</sup> These uncertainties and tensions were understandable, given that the RPF quickly consolidated power. The Government of National Unity put amendments into place which deviated from what the Arusha Accords had originally stipulated. The RPF introduced a strong executive presidency, imposed dominance of the RPF in the government, and redrew the composition of parliament.<sup>132</sup> Moreover, a study revealed statistics that showed how many Tutsi held positions of power and how many of them came from abroad:<sup>133</sup>

- Of Rwanda’s 12 [prefects], 7 were Tutsi and 5 returnees

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<sup>125</sup> Reyntjens, “Rwanda, Ten Years,” 1105.

<sup>126</sup> Ibid.

<sup>127</sup> Gourevitch, *We Wish to Inform You*, 229.

<sup>128</sup> Filip Reyntjens, *Political Governance in Post-Genocide Rwanda* (New York: Cambridge University Press) 2013, 4.

<sup>129</sup> Cori Wielenga, “Longing for Home: Pre-genocide and Post-genocide Refugees in Rwanda,” *African Journal on Conflict Resolution* 12, no.3 (2012): 4; Reyntjens, *Political Governance*.

<sup>130</sup> O Connor, “Repatriation,” 11; Eugenia Zorbas, “Reconciliation in Post-Genocide Rwanda,” *African Journal of Legal Studies* 1, no. 1 (2004): 44.

<sup>131</sup> Wielenga, Longing for Home,” 4.

<sup>132</sup> Reyntjens, “Rwanda, Ten Years On,” 1105.

<sup>133</sup> Zorbas, “Reconciliation in Post-Genocide,” 44.

- Of 12 commissioners on the National Unity and Reconciliation Commission (NURC), 9 were Tutsi and 4 returnees
- Of 22 supreme court judges, 14 were Tutsi and 15 were returnees
- Of 28 heads of state owned enterprises, 23 were Tutsi, 24 members of RPF (no figure for returned portion)
- Of 15 ambassadors, 13 were RPF members, 12 were Tutsi

### **5.3 Tensions at Home: the Need to De-ethnicize the Nation**

Hintjens argued that “the genocidal project was a reaction to a deep-rooted crisis of state legitimacy in Rwanda.”<sup>134</sup> In the post-genocide period state, understanding perceived legitimacy play an important role in the nature of Rwanda politics. While the RPF believed their status as victims and saviors from the diaspora legitimized their return to Rwanda as they liberated the country, there still existed divisive perceptions amongst Rwandans toward the government.

The people who were forced to go into exile were also those who, prior to fleeing their country, were the ones who held positions of power in local government and helped implement state policies; they were the people who had been “beneficiaries of the colonial state”.<sup>135</sup> Thus, when the political structured changed in the 1960s, many Rwandans believed that these refugees had simply been a “victims of structures of their own making.”<sup>136</sup> However, the refugees themselves had a contrasting perception. The “old caseload refugees” did not view themselves as a part of the “privileged aristocracy” who had been ousted in democratic elections. Instead, the RPF saw themselves as victims of “colonial policy.” This is key to their group identity.<sup>137</sup>

While the RPF self-identified with this victim label, the nature of their power in government was not seen as the same. Most of the men in the RPF who came to power and stayed in power were those who came from abroad. Most of them had never lived in Rwanda before 1990. Prunier observed that even if the regime did not want to consciously promote ideologies of exclusivism, “its very social structure and cultural strangeness embodied in Tutsi supporters coming from

<sup>134</sup> Hintjens, “Explaining the 1994 Genocide,” 251.

<sup>135</sup> Newbury, “Returning Refugees,” 271.

<sup>136</sup> Ibid.

<sup>137</sup> Van der Meeren, “Three Decades in Exile,” 5.

abroad makes it an alien form of power.”<sup>138</sup> Moreover, to the average Hutu peasant, the government was seen as a foreign government.<sup>139</sup> This has huge implications for reconciliation prospects, especially in a country in which identity is so important. And, because of how some Rwandans viewed the RPF, the government sought legitimacy in the eyes of their people.

The Rwandan Tutsis who returned home took positions in government, while the many Tutsis who stayed inside the country were often excluded from government.<sup>140</sup> Thus, these returnees came home to a government that had not been in the country for many years, and to many this made them perceive the government to be foreign invaders.<sup>141</sup> Of course this is problematic because it brings out the problem of legitimacy; the RPF needs to be perceived as legitimately holding power. Historically these perceptions have been fatal to the country. Politicizing identity and citizenship was used as genocide propaganda, as *genocidaires* spread the idea that Tutsis were a foreign people, so they were justified to drive them out of Rwanda.<sup>142</sup>

Furthermore, this was not a perception held by only by Hutu citizens. One Tutsi citizen stated in an interview: “We survivors find it very difficult to integrate into the present society and – I hate to say it – into the government, too. They have their own style from outside, and they don’t have much trust in us either. When they came they took the country as in a conquest. They thought it was theirs to look after.”<sup>143</sup> Further, another survivor reiterated the same sentiment: “They come here, they see us, and they say, ‘how did you survive? Did you collaborate with the Interhamwe?’ They think we were fools for having stayed in the country –and maybe we were- so they disdain us. They don’t want to be reminded. It shocks us to the bones.”<sup>144</sup> These perceptions show that intergroup tensions were not singularly based on ethnicity, but on lived experiences that came to shape their group identity.

Moreover, the returning diaspora members were hardly a unified group, even amongst themselves. One Tutsi returnee said: “I feel close to other people like me, people who have returned after the war. Somehow I feel free with them, not like people who lived here before and

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<sup>138</sup> Prunier, *The Rwanda Crisis*, 371.

<sup>139</sup> Ibid., 370.

<sup>140</sup> Newbury, “Returning Refugees,” 277-78.

<sup>141</sup> Newbury, “Returning Refugees,” 277.

<sup>142</sup> Hintjens, “Explaining the 1994 Genocide,” 247.

<sup>143</sup> Gourevitch, *We Wish to Inform You*, 233.

<sup>144</sup> Ibid., 232.



during the war. With these people, it is more difficult, they are more cautious and closed, I don't know where I stand."<sup>145</sup> Additionally, there were tensions between the returnees and the Rwandans who have been in the country. For example, even the returnees of 1994 were suspicious of the Rwandans who had grown up in the country, both Hutu and Tutsi. They assumed that these Tutsi and Hutu must have collaborated in the genocide if they had survived the genocide.<sup>146</sup> Moreover, returning Rwandans had to fight for resources like land.

These tensions were because of the RPF's swift consolidation of power as well as the RPF's historic identity as "foreigners." When examining the roots of the RPF, their identity was shaped not only by ethnic distinctions, but its implications for the Rwandans belongingness in the country. As Mamdani argued: "The RPF invasion of Rwanda from Uganda was the first signal that the crisis of citizenship had indeed taken on a regional dimension."<sup>147</sup> Moreover, Mamdani said: "The 1990 invasion should be understood as an armed repatriation of Banyarwanda refugees from Uganda." Thus, for many Hutu, the 1990 insurrection resembled more a foreign invasion than a liberation.

In this sense, ethnic identity was still inextricably linked with identity; the Hamitic Myth remained relevant. As Susanne Buckley-zistal posited: "The significance of the invented history of Rwandan lies in its impact on citizenship."<sup>148</sup> Tutsi were increasingly portrayed not merely as immigrants but as foreign occupants and oppressors- not unlike the colonialists." Citizenship became defined by ethnic identity, linked to the idea of who belonged in and outside the country. This idea of Tutsi racial superiority affected this perception, and clearly transcended generations. These perceptions were highly problematic to the RPF. It challenged the state's ability to reconcile and rebuild in the post-genocide context, and furthermore threatened the power of the state apparatus itself. Thus, in accordance with the narrative of national unity and reconciliation, reeducation of citizens was another way in which the government sought to recreate the ideal Rwandan identity. This, among other reasons, is a key reason for understanding why the RPF sought a stringent plan of de-ethnicization and creating a united post-genocide Rwandan state.

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<sup>145</sup> Purdekova, "Beyond De-Ethnicisation," 9.

<sup>146</sup> Burnet, "Whose Genocide," 83.

<sup>147</sup> Mamdani, *When Victims Become Killers*, 36.

<sup>148</sup> Buckley-zistel, "Dividing and Uniting," 104.

## **Chapter 6: Recreating the State and Citizen: Managing, Constructing, and Navigating Collective Identities In and Outside Rwanda**

This chapter focuses on the RPF's nation building project, specifically exploring the ways in which the RPF engaged with different "parts" of the diaspora. In the new Rwanda, the key to nation building is defining who now lives in Rwanda, who belongs, and who makes up the ideal Rwandan citizen. This chapter critically interprets the ways in which the RPF engaged with the diaspora to build the nation. This is demonstrated in two ways, through both discourse and practice; that is – how the government manufactures and reinforces identity and citizenship, and the programs implemented. The RPF's engagement with both Rwandans living in the diaspora and those returning from it plays equally important roles in understanding the RPF's identity politics. This chapter illustrates how the process of recreating the state-citizen relationship was politically manipulated.

### **6.1 Constructing a United Rwanda**

At the end of the transition period in 2001, Rwanda was yet at "another crossroads." As defined by the Arusha Accords, the transition was to end in less than a year by a constitutional referendum and multi-party elections, signaling that the country was successfully democratizing.<sup>149</sup> As Lemarchand described it, in the post-genocide period Rwanda's government had to undergo a "drastic reconfiguration of collective identities,"<sup>150</sup> and the RPF chose to do so with the goal of building a nation. This was done in two ways: by building a united, de-ethnicized state of Rwanda, and redefining and reconfiguring what it mean to "be Rwandan." Building this narrative of a united Rwanda was critical for the RPF in order for it to strengthen state power and create a unified state with no divisive factions to hinder this goal. The Rwandan diaspora played an important role in this.

After the genocide, the RPF built upon a strict and purposeful nation building script, essential for the country's huge need to rebuild after the genocide. Their goal was emphasized by the Vision 2020, a program launched in 2000, which the government described as a reflection of Rwanda's

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<sup>149</sup> *Rwanda at the End of the Transition: A Necessary Political Liberalisation*. Report. Africa Report ed. Vol. 53. Brussels: International Crisis Group, 2002.

<sup>150</sup> Rene Lemarchand, "The Politics of Memory in Post-Genocidal Rwanda" In *After Genocide: Transitional Justice, Post-Conflict Reconstruction and Reconciliation in Rwanda and Beyond*, edited by Phil Clark and Z. Kaufman, 65-76 (London: Hurst & Company), 2009.

aspirations and determination to “construct a united, democratic and inclusive Rwandan identity, after so many years of authoritarian and exclusivist dispensation.”<sup>151</sup> Thus, in accordance with this vision, one of the priorities of the RPF was to stop divisiveness by attempting to “de-ethnicize” the nation. This was key to building the government’s narrative of the “New Rwanda.”

In order to rebuild a country, the RPF stressed a new type of identity, in which “being Rwandan” was now only associated with citizenship. This is the primary work of the National Unity and Reconciliation Commission (NURC), established in 1999, with the mandate to foster unity and reconciliation throughout the country. The presiding message of the NURC is: “There are no Hutu and Tutsi, there are only Rwandans.” Thus, in this Rwanda, citizenship is no longer based on ethnic identity but on Rwandanness.<sup>152</sup> Furthermore, de-ethnicisation was understood as a method the government used to “re-root” identity.<sup>153</sup> This is evident in the RPF’s management of both Rwandans living abroad, and Rwandans returning home. Thus, engaging with the diaspora was a key component of Rwanda’s nation building plan as evident through the government rhetoric.

At the end of the post transitional period in 2003, the government prepared for the first presidential and parliamentary elections since the genocide. The Mouvement Democratique Republicain (MDR) was effectively banned, and it was the largest Hutu opposition party and really the only significant Hutu voice in the Rwandan government. This banning was on the basis that the party spread genocidal ideology and divisionism.”<sup>154</sup> In 2001, a law combating divisionism was imposed; it penalized discrimination and sectarianism. The law provides the following definitions of the terms:

*Discrimination is any speech, writing, or actions based on ethnicity, region or country of origin, the colour of the skin, physical features, sex, language, religion or ideas aimed at depriving a person or group of persons of their rights as provided by Rwandan law and by International Conventions to which Rwanda is party.*

<sup>151</sup> Forward of Vision 2020 by Kagame, <http://www.rwandachamber.org/rwanda+vision+2020>

<sup>152</sup> Buckley-Zistal, “Dividing and Uniting,” 11.

<sup>153</sup> Andrea Purdeková, “Building a Nation in Rwanda? De-ethnicisation and its Discontents”, *Studies in Ethnicity and Nationalism* 8, no. 3 (2008): 502-523.

<sup>154</sup> Phil Clark, *The Gacaca Courts, Post-Genocide Justice and Reconciliation in Rwanda: Justice without Lawyers*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press) 2010, 22.

*Sectarianism means the use of any speech, written statement or action that divides people, that is likely to spark conflicts among people, or that causes an uprising which might degenerate into strife among people based on discrimination...*<sup>155</sup>

Under this law, people who are guilty of divisionism are punished harshly and sentenced to prison for a period of one to twenty years.<sup>156</sup> However, these definitions are very poorly defined and seemingly interchangeable. It is extremely vague as to what is meant by divisionism, which can be assumed to mean the same thing as discrimination and sectarianism. Human rights organizations like Freedom House and Amnesty International have both stated that this vague definition is “susceptible to manipulation and abuse.”<sup>157</sup> Nonetheless, imparting these laws showed the RPF’s firm commitment to building a Rwanda narrative based on a united, identity. Moreover, it reaffirmed that the state building project in Rwanda post-genocide was clearly a top down, political process.<sup>158</sup>

In addressing the United Nations, Kagame recently stressed the importance of national identity as he listed what was critical to peace building and conflict resolution, stating that “to manage the diversity in our societies, politics must be national in scope. Whatever differences we may have, our common citizenship is a bond that unites us.”<sup>159</sup> Since the RPF came to power, this has been a clear part of the RPF’s national agenda. In following with the government’s aim of reconstructing the “Rwandan state,” the RPF likewise sought to redefine the Rwandan citizen. Keeping with the goal of a united Rwandan, the RPF hoped to create a “Rwandan national civic citizenship” that transcends ethnic categories.<sup>160</sup> In doing so, the RPF redefined these categories of Rwandans, both living inside and outside the country. This process of managing and recategorizing citizens must be understood in the context of the state power. The RPF’s top down state building project is inherently politicized and is therefore linked to state power and state

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<sup>155</sup> Rwanda. Ministry of Justice. *Codes and Laws of Rwanda*. 2002. [http://www.geneva-academy.ch/RULAC/pdf\\_state/Law-47-2001-crime-discrimination-sectraianism.pdf](http://www.geneva-academy.ch/RULAC/pdf_state/Law-47-2001-crime-discrimination-sectraianism.pdf).

<sup>156</sup> Lars Waldorf, “Instrumentalizing Genocide: The RPF’s Campaign Against ‘Genocide Ideology,’” in *Remaking Rwanda: State Building and Human Rights After Mass Violence*, edited by Lars Waldorf and Scott Straus, 48-66. Madison, Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press, 2011, 56.

<sup>157</sup> Canada: Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada. *Rwanda: Legislation Governing Divisionism and Its Impact on Political Parties, the Media, Civil Society and Individuals (2004 - June 2007)*.

<sup>158</sup> Purdekova, “Building a Nation,” 502.

<sup>159</sup> *Address by President Paul Kagame to the United Nations*, September 2014. [http://www.un.org/en/ga/69/meetings/gadebate/pdf/RW\\_en.pdf](http://www.un.org/en/ga/69/meetings/gadebate/pdf/RW_en.pdf).

<sup>160</sup> O’Connor, “Repatriation,” 8.

objectives; the process of nation building thus implies that there is an author, or “agents of dissemination,” that is clearly linked to state power and state leadership.<sup>161</sup>

Thus, the categorization of citizens in the diaspora reflects the RPF’s politicization of collective identities. The Rwandan diaspora is not homogenous, yet the government tries to categorize them into distinct categories, when in reality their identities are not that simple, as the following section will explore. The most prevalent way that the RPF wanted to build a new Rwanda was to recreate, reimagine, recreating identities and redefine what it meant to be a citizen. This next section will show the ways in which the RPF tried to do so.

## 6.2 Top-Down Reconfiguration of Identities inside Rwanda

The first official engagement with diaspora in the new Rwanda started in 1996, with the repatriation of Rwandans from neighboring countries, in particular the million refugees living in Eastern Zaire. This time the repatriation is of an entirely different nature, as it focused on the return of another “category” of Rwandans - “new caseload refugees” who mostly comprised of those who fled Rwanda right after the genocide ended. This repatriation was vastly different than the repatriation in the immediate aftermath of the genocide. This repatriation was forced, due to the security issue with continued killings in militant refugee camps occurring in neighboring countries.<sup>162</sup> Ven der Meerwent, writing in 1996, warned of this process: “Under the conditions of post-genocide Rwanda ...the emphasis on repatriation of the two million Hutu refugees outside Rwanda carries enormous risks of future conflict for both these countries and for the neighbouring states which may well become embroiled.”<sup>163</sup> Thus, the repatriation effort from the government was in direct response to a security threat to the country. The Rwandan government estimated that by the end of 1997 approximately 800,000 new caseload refugees had returned.<sup>164</sup>

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<sup>161</sup> Purdekova, “Repatriation and Reconciliation,” 10.

<sup>162</sup> Between 1997 and 1999 Rwandans inside the country found themselves caught between RPF soldiers and an insurgency, made up of composed of former Interhamwe militiamen and FAR soldiers and included recruits from these bordering countries’ refugee camps; Burnet, “Whose Genocide,” 82.

<sup>163</sup> Van Der Meeran, “Three Decades in Exile.”

<sup>164</sup> *Uprooting the Rural Poor in Rwanda*. Report. New York City: Human Rights Watch, 2001.

These “new caseload” returnees were somewhat similar to the “old caseload refugees” but in contrast, they faced another set of challenges. These refugees returned home to not only find their country in shambles but their homes occupied, belongings taken, and land claimed by others. Moreover, the government they returned to was hostile and suspicious, and neighbors were deeply traumatized. There were clear tensions between the two groups of returnees; the new case load refugees faced hatred and scorn from the old caseload refugees. Despite the fact that these returnees had been away from home for several years, the home they returned to was nonetheless physically, politically, socially, and culturally, a different places from what they had known.”<sup>165</sup>

This group of returnees, like their counterparts of 1994, became grouped in collective identity labels of “old” and “new” caseload refugees. These identities became politicized and exacerbated tensions. These were intergroup tensions, but also significant was the relationship between the refugee “groups” and the government. The new returnees were suspicious in the eyes of their neighbor and the government. They faced many difficulties and a great deal of discrimination on their return; their homes were occupied, they were suspected of being perpetrators, sympathizers, or collaborators. Hutu elites who returned became victims of harassment, imprisonment and killed under suspicious circumstances.<sup>166</sup>

A portion of the Hutus who fled the country when the RPF seized the capital was in fact *genocidaires* and organizers of the genocide. Yet, the reality was that this group made up only around five percent of the 2 million Hutus who left. However, as Newbury argued: “In the eyes of many all these refugees were collectively held responsible, partly through the assumptions of “corporate ethnicity.”<sup>167</sup>

Burnet asserted : “The shared experiences among individuals...shape distinct subject positions from which people view the world and negotiate their way in it.”<sup>168</sup> This was certainly true in post-genocide Rwanda, and would prove to be very problematic for building a national identity as it became a politicized framework. There was a stark difference between how the government not only labels these two groups, but treats them, based on the collective identity of the groups’

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<sup>165</sup> Newbury, “Returning Refugees,” 281.

<sup>166</sup> Reyntjens, “Rwanda, 10 Years” 180; Burnet, “Whose Genocide,” 82.

<sup>167</sup> Newbury, “Returning Refugees,” 279.

<sup>168</sup> Burnet, “Whose Genocide,” 83.

different lived experiences. The repatriation of the new returnees made it more evident that divisive identities existed in Rwanda, as the government created new categories to define the complex population inside the country, but it was evident that ethnicity remained an underlying factor.

Mamdani critically examined the “genocide framework” from which the population was categorized politically, meaning that “the 1994 genocide is singled out as an event producing the only politically correct categories for identification and guidelines for state policy.”<sup>169</sup> Thus there was a single narrative from which the government bases its policies to reconfigure the state. According to the state discourse, the population is divided into five categories: returnees, refugees, victims, survivors, and perpetrators. Returnees are mainly Tutsi (and some Hutu) exiles who had returned with the RPF. Refugees were divided into two groups: old caseload, who were mainly Tutsi refugees pre-genocide, and new caseload, who were mostly Hutu post-genocide refugees. Despite the fact that both Tutsi and Hutu are victims, only Tutsi are identified as victims. They are labeled as “Tutsi genocide survivors” and only “caseload refugees.” Survivor is a term only applied to the Tutsi, because the genocide was aimed at Tutsi. Finally, perpetrator is used for only Hutus, because it is the assumption that every Hutu who opposed the genocide was killed, and all living Hutu are was either an active participate or passive onlooker.

These identities were not simply labels; they had clear consequences and implications attached to them. For instance, because new caseload refugees were not considered victims, they were not entitled to any assistance for the construction of homes. These restrictive, collective, and stereotypical categories are problematic for many reasons. Hintjens, writing about the complexities of political identities in Rwanda, provides a case study of a Rwandan exile to illustrate this problematic concept:

Noelle’s father was a prominent official under the former Habyarimana regime, and this automatically made Noelle a suspected génocidaire in present-day rural Rwanda. She is the only known survivor of a family of 10 and the offspring of a mixed Hutu–Tutsi marriage... ...Noelle has been trapped between her father’s reputation as a prominent (though not active) official under the previous regime, and her status as a victim of rape

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<sup>169</sup> Mamdani, *When Victims Become Killers*, 267.

by an RPA soldier. She fears she could be silenced as a witness to war crimes in former Zaire, now DRC. In spite of her ‘Tutsi’ appearance, she is clear that she can not share her mother’s political identity as a genocide victim because of her Hutu father...The political identity affixed to her was of a new caseload returnee – one guilty by association of being active in the political opposition.<sup>170</sup>

Thus, the labels prescribed to groups of people living in Rwanda were highly politicized and do not serve to accurately reflect lived identities of Rwandans. More so, this shows that the government clearly wanted to group people as means of control.

### **6.3 Engaging with the Diaspora Abroad**

In addition to configuring Rwandan identities inside its country’s border, the RPF was also committed to engaging with Rwandan citizens abroad. In 2001, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Corporation created the Diaspora General Directorate (DGD) to specifically deal with the diaspora.<sup>171</sup> Its purpose was to use it to engage in diaspora “potentials” for its role in Rwanda’s development. The DGD’s welcome note emphasized that while national development is a difficult task, it is possible with a “united” and “willing” diaspora.

These thoughts are reflected through the strategic objectives of the Diaspora General Directorate:

- To mobilize active Rwandan diaspora for socio-economic activities of their motherland;
- To encourage Rwandan diaspora to promote their culture and safeguard the interests and privileges of Rwandan expatriate abroad;
- To mobilize the Rwandan diaspora communities abroad for a sustained and organized image building of their motherland;
- To serve as a liaison between different public, private institutions in Rwanda and international organizations with Rwandan diaspora;
- To mobilize expatriate and highly skilled Rwandan diaspora on knowledge and skills transfer to Rwanda;

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<sup>170</sup> Hintjens, “Reconstructing Political Identities,” 90.

<sup>171</sup> Turner, “Staging the Rwanda Diaspora,” 271.



- To create an enabling environment for financial investment and remittances, trade for Rwandan diaspora in Rwanda;
- To coordinate and harmonize different initiatives and activities related to Rwandan diaspora in Rwanda.<sup>172</sup>

This is evident in President Kagame's discourse as well, who would frequently visit diaspora almost every time he goes abroad. In 2006, while in South Africa, Kagame addressed 500 members at a diaspora conference, advising them to help contribute to the "advancement of their motherland." Thus, he appealed to a "national consciousness."<sup>173</sup> Furthermore, this is evident in the state's Vision 2020, which lists six pillars necessary to bring forth the plans in the vision. The first pillar includes goals for state engagement with the diaspora. Under the section on "Good Governance and a Capable State," it lists:

Rwanda will become a modern, united and prosperous nation founded on the positive values of its culture. The nation will be open to the world, including its own Diaspora. Rwandans will be a people, sharing the same vision for the future and ready to contribute to social cohesion, equity and equality of opportunity. The country is committed to being a capable state, characterized by the rule of law that supports and protects all its citizens without discrimination. The state is dedicated to the rights, unity and wellbeing of its people and will ensure the consolidation of the nation and its security.<sup>174</sup>

The discourse of collective identities and labels in Rwanda go hand in hand with the government's narrative of a united Rwanda. In trying to build this narrative of unity, the state essentially labeled the diaspora and categorized them. The discourse that is linked with the ideal Rwandan citizen has a clear purpose; it helps the RPF build the government's narrative of the united, new, reconciled Rwanda. According to the Rwandan Diaspora Guide, the vision of Rwandan diaspora policies is a "united Rwandan diaspora... and point is to mobilize Rwandan

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<sup>172</sup> "DGD Welcome Note." Diaspora General Directorate Welcome Note. Accessed January 01, 2016. <http://www.rwandandiaspora.gov.rw/index.php?id=22>.

<sup>173</sup> "Kagame Urges Diaspora Youth to Carry Forward Agaciro Legacy." The New Times. May 24, 2015. <http://www.newtimes.co.rw/section/article/2015-05-24/189085/>.

<sup>174</sup> "Rwanda Vision 2020." *Rwanda Chamber Country of Opportunities*, accessed January 10, 2016. <http://www.rwandachamber.org/rwanda+vision+2020>.

Diaspora for unity/cohesion among themselves.”<sup>175</sup> Thus, there was the rhetoric was the collective united diaspora identity.

### 6.3.1 Labeling the “Good Diaspora”

In reaching out to the diaspora, the same problematic labeling of groups and creating collective identities is evident with the state engaging with Rwandans who have yet to return to the country. When the state is engaging with its diaspora, there is a clear distinction between who it is talking to and reaching out to. The diaspora itself has been prescribed distinct labels from the government.

It clear that there are many different “types” of citizens that fit this category of the diaspora. There are labels of what makes a “good diaspora” and a “problematic diaspora,” just like a “good citizen” and “bad citizen.” Cori Wielenga argued: “... Civic identity has the danger to further essentialise personal identity by creating a new category of what it means to be Rwandan that will yet again marginalise, hegemonise and exclude some in order to empower others.”<sup>176</sup> This is very evident in Rwanda. Divisive identities transcend the narrative of unity because it was exclusive, as we can see in the types of labels given to citizens in and outside of Rwanda, and this has been evident in the discourse in Rwanda’s Diaspora Policy.

According to the 2009 Rwanda Diaspora Policy, Rwanda diasporas are defined as “All Rwandans who left their country voluntarily or were forced to live in other countries of the world and are *willing to contribute to the development of Africa*. ”<sup>177</sup> Moreover, there is the “ideal Rwandan citizen” that is very evident in Kagame’s discourse. In a speech that Kagame made on Rwanda Day, a global event held to link the Rwandan government with the diaspora community, he urged members of the diaspora to “be a model citizen wherever you are....It’s our collective responsibility.”<sup>178</sup> Thus, this rhetoric goes hand in hand with the Rwanda Diaspora Policy, which also states that the government strongly believes that the Rwandan diaspora can be well

<sup>175</sup> Shindo, “Hidden Effect,” 1690.

<sup>176</sup> Wielenga, “Lived Identities,” 4.

<sup>177</sup> Shindo, “Hidden Effect,” 1686, my emphasis.

<sup>178</sup> “President Kagame Tells over 3000 Rwandans in Toronto That Rwanda’s Future Is Our Collective Responsibility.” *Diaspora Rwanda Montreal*, September 28, 2013. <http://diasporarwandamontreal.com/index.php/news/104-president-kagame-tells-over-3000-rwandans-in-toronto-that-rwanda’s-future-is-our-collective-responsibility.html>.

harnessed to contribute to the country. Yet, if the Rwanda government calls upon the “model citizen,” who then is a ‘non-model citizen’?

The “good diaspora” is comprised of the model Rwanda citizen who is willing to contribute to developing Rwanda. Being a “good citizen” as part of the new Rwandan narrative had to do with national belonging and obligation to the state, rather than getting demands from the state.<sup>179</sup> As a Rwandan editorialist observes: “The ‘model diasporan’, is not one that spends much time protesting outside Embassies, but one that teaches their children Kinyarwanda, remits, attends officially organised events, and reinforces the normality of Rwanda.”<sup>180</sup> The Diaspora Policy even describes a “positive” diaspora among those who fled for political and security reasons. This group is described as: “Especially composed of descendents [sic] of 1959 refugees that are returning to Rwanda and are playing in different ways a critical role toward the national development in the public and private sectors.”<sup>181</sup>

In contrast, the diaspora who left after 1994 are described in a different way: “It was identified that part of this population are grouped into armed and political subversive groups, social, cultural, and the so-called human rights associations while others operate as individuals to spread genocide ideology and sensitize other Rwandan Diaspora to go against Government’s policies and programmes targeting national development.”<sup>182</sup> Thus, it was clear that a collective group identity was given to the “problematic” citizens of the diaspora. For Kagame, this was the organized opposition coming from Tutsi political groups abroad, in addition to groups who were still spreading genocide ideologies.<sup>183</sup> Kagame’s discourse indicates a clear separation between a “good” and a “bad” diaspora. In a speech in 2000, he made the call for the return of Rwandan exiles:

I am calling upon all Rwandans still in exile, whether in Africa or abroad, to return home... Let them come and join hands with us to build our country. I also call upon all the Rwandans still in the Democratic Republic of Congo and elsewhere, still harbouring

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<sup>179</sup> O’Connor, “Repatriation,” 5.

<sup>180</sup> Will Jones, “Diaspora as Anti-Politics: The Case of Rwanda.” *Democracy in Africa*. November 28, 2015. <http://democracyin africa.org/diaspora-as-anti-politics-the-case-of-rwanda/>.

<sup>181</sup> Ibid.

<sup>182</sup> Kithmina Hewage, “Victim-Politics and Post-Conflict Foreign Policy in Rwanda and Sri Lanka,” *E-International News*. July 24, 2014, accessed January 1, 2016, <http://www.e-ir.info/2014/07/24/victim-politics-and-post-conflict-foreign-policy-in-rwanda-and-sri-lanka/>.

<sup>183</sup> Waugh, *Paul Kagame and Rwanda*, 147.

plans to wage war against their country, to give up, come back and join hands with us to build our motherland. A good number of them left this bad path, came and were returned to the civilian life, others were reintegrated into the various institutions of leadership, both in the army and the civilian life...<sup>184</sup>

Thus, the government acknowledges this problematic diaspora. Moreover, during a global diaspora convention in Kigali in 2009, senior state officials Charles Karamba and Joseph Nzabamwita at the Rwanda Diaspora Global Convention noted that the diaspora can help the nation if they could “counter the activities of the Negative diaspora.”<sup>185</sup> There has been numerous occasions that show the RPF has sought to manage this “negative” diaspora. For example, a previous ambassador to Sweden said that her task was to keep an eye on potential *genocidaires*, and a Rwandan living in Denmark said he was asked by authorities to spy on his fellow Rwandan countrymen in Denmark.<sup>186</sup>

### 6.3.2 Collective “Victim” and “Perpetrator” Identities

While the RPF labeled the “good and bad” diaspora, it also politicized and manipulated these collective identities abroad and at home. Helen Hintjens uses Robin Cohen’s term victim diasporic nationalism to describe Rwandan nationalism, claiming that it is based on “myth of diasporic Tutsi victimhood.” This is based on the assumption that a social group based on some common origin has been victimized for a long time, and that members of the group forced into exile have to return, in this case to Rwanda, to reclaim their “promised land” and that “those in Rwanda who have victim status are allied by a common persecution, whether they were in exile or in Rwanda itself.”<sup>187</sup>

The government narrative and vision is to have a united diaspora. Shindo explains how there is a clear dichotomy between “desirable diaspora groups and unwanted ones.”<sup>188</sup> However, the implications of this coupled with those on political identities made this distinction even more impactful. This is because the RPF came to associate these in terms of guilt and victimhood.

<sup>184</sup> "Kagame's Speech Highlights." *BBC News*, April 22, 2000. <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/723090.stm>.

<sup>185</sup> Turner, “Staging the Diaspora,” 274.

<sup>186</sup> *Ibid.*, 278.

<sup>187</sup> Helen Hintjens, “Post-Genocide Identity Politics in Rwanda,” *Ethnicities* 8, no. 1 (2008): 81.

<sup>188</sup> Shindo, “Hidden Effect,” 1690.

Thus came a discourse that was very dichotomous- with the “bad” diaspora meaning the Hutu who fit in the “potential” perpetrator category and might spread genocide ideologies abroad.

Mamdani argued that cycles of violence in Rwanda have been fueled by “victim psychologies.”<sup>189</sup> This has been evident through Rwanda’s history, and is still pertinent in Rwanda “post-conflict,” as the RPF has continued to utilize and politicize their victim diaspora identity. The RPF’s victim discourse is evident through its continued consolidation and legitimization of state power, and through its use of victimhood to evade accountability for war crimes.

In keeping with the national goal of rebuilding a nation based on a united citizenry, examining diaspora politics have provided insight into post-genocide governance based on a shared RPF identity of victimhood. It was not confined to the government only. A shared sense of victimhood can be empowering and helpful for groups of people trying to rebuild their lives after a tragedy. The problem with victimhood-based identity in Rwanda is that it is an extremely dichotomous concept. Victim identity assumes a perpetrator identity, and this is quite troubling for Rwanda especially, which has had history of such bipolar group identification.

One way was to create these identities that were meant to be unifying. However, this became very problematic because of this collective diaspora victim identity that the RPF had utilized to have collective guilt and collective victimhood as well. This is polarizing Rwanda more than it is bringing them together, despite the fact that the post-genocide regime claims there is a shared national political identity as Rwandans. But, as Hintjens concluded, the dangerous reality is that “victim diasporic nationalism in Rwanda is implicitly exclusive.”<sup>190</sup>

The danger of this is that it extends these assumptions to whole groups of people. Hintjens argued: “the assumption...is that a social group based on some common origin has been victimized for a long time, and that members of the group forced into exile have to return, in this case to Rwanda, to reclaim their “promised land.”<sup>191</sup> Thus, those in Rwanda who had “victim status” were treated as part of a collective group of victims, whether or not they were inside the

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<sup>189</sup> Diane Enns, “Identity and Victimhood: Questions for Conflict Management Practice.” *Berghof Occasional Paper*, no. 28 (2007).

<sup>190</sup> Hintjens, “Post Genocide,” 81.

<sup>191</sup> Ibid.

country during the genocide. Thus, people who left Rwanda at certain times left under different circumstances, and this diasporic history came be used to collectively stigmatize groups of people. And, collective victimhood meant collective perpetrators.

The RPF's diaspora identity is problematic for one reason – members of the government saw themselves as victims due to its diaspora experience and therefore the legitimate power holders. These identities became politicized and were used to set a specific agenda on how they wanted the new Rwanda to be. Hintjens argued that the RPF came to see the Hutu as dangerous and the ones to blame for the RPF's exile and persecution in the first place. Hintjens warned: "This is the founding myth upon which Rwandan nationalism is now in danger of being based,"<sup>192</sup> and a key component of that was "creating" the identity of the potential perpetrator. The RPF's dominant one-party state is problematic not only because of the implications for human rights and unity, but because of the particular political system that it put into place, a specific vision of the future of the country, "a diasporan nationalism repatriated."<sup>193</sup>

Thus, we see that the diasporic history of Rwandans played a key role on the social context and psyche of the Rwandan people, and most evident in the psyche and identity and consciousness of the RPF. This played a major role the nation building project that the RPF embarked on, and struggles over legitimacy and citizenship and these identities would pervade even in the "New Rwanda."

### **Creating a "Perpetrator"**

As evident during the genocide and again in the immediate post-genocide period when the RPF struggled to legitimize their image as the victim group who liberated the country, victim politics come into play again as the RPF uses its victim identity as one way to justify their rule to fellow Rwandans. In addition, the RPF's image to the outside world is very important. Yet there have been many concerns voiced by people inside and outside the country, speaking out against the seemingly dictatorial nature of the RPF since the power takeover in 1994. The RPF's victim identity stemming from the diaspora remains key to understanding its reaction to these concerns. In order to effectively utilize a foreign policy based on victimhood and increase state power,

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<sup>192</sup> Hintjens, "Post Genocide," 81.

<sup>193</sup> Purdekova, "Beyond De-ethnicisation," 12.

Rwanda had to be sure to effectively identify a perpetrator, enemy, or threat to substantiate its victim based identity.

For Rwanda, this threat has changed over the years. In the transition period, the threat represents itself in the form of anti-Tutsi militias in neighboring Democratic Republic of Congo. This was quite clear cut perpetrator, as active killings continued for years at the borders. The eight years of transition from 1994 to 2002 were marked by a situation of almost permanent war, due to the ongoing military threat from armed Hutu groups based in the region and the countries that backed them. This situation had a negative impact on the planned process of political reform, and most of all on political liberties. While international actors previously thought the government was partly justified because of internal security, it became clear that the government needed to politically liberalize.<sup>194</sup>

In more recent years, the potential perpetrator became more convoluted and contested. In the absence of an active oppressor, diaspora communities may feel that they have lost the main identifier of their cause and thus lose legitimacy in the eyes of the state.<sup>195</sup> Thus, “potential perpetrator” to Rwanda became anything that threatens national reconciliation. For the diaspora, this means that it became closely managed and controlled.

Unfortunately this is also coming in the form of attacking exiles who are speaking out. They are seen as “threats” because they may “spread genocide ideologies.” Furthermore, this is problematic with an announcement from the UNHCR that refugee status of all Rwandans who fled the country between 1959 and December 1998 will cease in June 2013. Rwandan officials insist that it is peaceful and safe and that there is no reason for refugees to remain outside the country.<sup>196</sup> Despite this claim from the government, continued attacks are causing a lot of fear and uncertainty for members of the Diaspora to return home to Rwanda.<sup>197</sup> In conclusion,

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<sup>194</sup> "Rwanda at the End of the Transition: A Necessary Political Liberalisation." International Crisis Group. 2002. <http://www.crisisgroup.org/en/regions/africa/central-africa/rwanda/053-rwanda-at-the-end-of-the-transition-a-necessary-political-liberalisation.aspx>.

<sup>195</sup> Shaheen Akhtar, “Managing Ethnic Conflict in Sri Lanka: Going beyond the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam,” in *Fixing Fractured Nations: The Challenge of Ethnic Separatism in the Asia-Pacific*, edited by R. G. Wirsing and E. Ahrari, 159-182. New York: Basingstoke, 2010.

<sup>196</sup> O'Connor, “Repatriation,” 1.

<sup>197</sup> Judi Rever, “What is Happening to Rwandan Refugees in Uganda?” *Le Monde Diplomatique*, June 2013, accessed February 1, 2016, <http://mondediplo.com/blogs/what-is-happening-to-rwandan-refugees-in-uganda>.

politicizing the victimhood identity does several things for RPF: justifies their policies, legitimizes their power, and create a whole new category of the “unideal Rwandan citizen,” or the “threat” to the country.



## Chapter 7: Building the State Narrative

This chapter explores another way in which the Rwandan government has sought to reinvent the ideal Rwandan citizen by changing perceptions of the government. They propagated a specific picture they wanted to show through discourse as well as formalized education, or “reeducation” programs. This chapter analyzes these two ways. Both of these methods include the diaspora; the government engaged with its diaspora to disseminate this information.

### 7.1 Managing Perceptions and Knowledge

A final way to explore how the state has managed and recreated the Rwandan citizen is through its narrative building through discourse and its reeducation programs, aimed at both returning diaspora members and those still abroad. Knowledge is a key part of creating citizens in Rwanda. This has a clear historical precedent in the context of Rwanda. As Mamdani noted: “the founding ideology of Tutsi Power in post-genocide Rwanda is the memory of the genocide and the moral manipulation never to let it happen again.”<sup>198</sup> The genocide framework was still very much relevant in the minds of the government. Thus, the government acknowledged the importance of rebuilding a narrative that was vastly different than the genocide framework.

As the 2007 Reconciliation Policy states, unity and reconciliation “requires every citizen to change their mind completely.”<sup>199</sup> Therefore, it was necessary for citizens to have a mindset that was fitting to the Rwanda narrative. Civic duty, a shared history, and nationalistic pride were components of the ideal Rwandan citizen, and government sanctioned reeducation programs highlighted these vital themes. As Turner shows, these programs were aimed at “making good citizens,” that is, transforming the “bad life” into a good one.<sup>200</sup>

Ensuring that citizens have “correct” thoughts is one aspect of creating the ideal citizen. This narrative exists to dictate what ideologies and schemas are allowed inside Rwanda. This chapter argues that these programs were put in place to combat the perceptions of the RPF that were not

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<sup>198</sup> Mamdani, *When Victims Become Killers*, 271.

<sup>199</sup> National Unity and Reconciliation Commission (NURC), Annual Report, February 1999 – June 2000. Kigali: National Unity and Reconciliation Commission, 2000.

<sup>200</sup> Simon Turner, “Making Good Citizens from Bad Life in Post-Genocide Rwanda,” *Development and Change* 45, no.3 (2014): 416.

aligned with the narrative it wanted to espouse. Thus, through the state-controlled programs, the RPF sought to produce a specific narrative to help reconcile the nation and overcome divisive identities.

I argue that this is a very carefully crafted narrative that is significant because it targets people both inside and outside the country. Moreover, the programs promote nationalism and paint a very clear picture of what the “ideal citizen” should be. Most importantly, these citizens have to fit the vision of the state. For example, a government publication entitled “All you need to know about Rwanda” noted the following: “Many people who had the chance to visit Rwanda have been...intrigued by the fact that Rwandans are harmoniously living together only 10 years after the Genocide...Today, not only are Rwandans living together but they share the common aspirations as one people, as it used to be.”<sup>201</sup> Purdekova questions this political governance on rhetoric, saying, “Is this really all we need to know, or should it rather be the point of departure in our ‘project of knowing’?”<sup>202</sup> Thus, the government rhetoric must be taken with some scrutiny and understood in the context of their narrative.

## **7.2 A Call to the Diaspora to Return Home**

### **7.2.1 Welcoming the Diaspora Home to a United Rwanda**

Newbury explained: “We cannot understand the particular nature of “coming home,” therefore without understanding the nature of the actor’s relationships to political power, to the state.”<sup>203</sup> This time, the government’s engagement with the diaspora was very different from the forced repatriation of 1996. Instead, the government formalized its approach and actively sought out the members of the diaspora to return home. Engaging with the diaspora became one of its priorities; the RPF sought to rebuild a nation and rebuild its citizenry as well. Thus the government welcomed home Rwandans from abroad, inviting members from all over the diaspora to come home and help rebuild their country. Many of them have lived abroad for some years. This

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<sup>201</sup> Purdekova, “Repatriation and Reconciliation,” 11.

<sup>202</sup> Ibid.

<sup>203</sup> Newbury, “Returning Refugee,” 256.

message is clearly in line with the government's nation building rhetoric; it was a message appealing to the desire for national unity, and a call for Rwandans to have a common goal.<sup>204</sup> Government discourse, policies, programs, and laws all reflected this objective. Overall, approximately 2.1-3.4 million Hutu and Tutsi refugees have returned since 1994. This is the largest recorded repatriation in the world.<sup>205</sup> The UNHCR has been aiding this; since the end of 2002 the UNHCR and other African countries signed agreements to guarantee "voluntary, safe and dignified return."<sup>206</sup>

Through interviews with Rwandans, Wielenga revealed the diverse attitudes of Rwandans and the immense tensions that still existed during this transition. Many who returned did so because they believed in the RPF's message and wanted to go home. As one returnee stressed in an interview, those who are abroad need to come home so they can work through the issues that remain in the reconciliation process, even though it is not easy for young Hutu. Furthermore, he said that fears from people living outside the country are unfounded, and that they need to see how the country has progressed through the years.<sup>207</sup>

This of course was not an opinion held by everyone. Another repatriated Rwandan Hutu expressed how the government does not allow anyone to speak of the RPF's crimes or those who have lost family because of the RPF: "If there is no fear in Rwanda, why are we not hearing their stories?"<sup>208</sup> Thus, the perceptions of Rwandan Hutus who returned from the diaspora were varied. Moreover, the political repression of the RPF led to many Rwandans choosing to leave the country; the press, organizations, and opposition parties were silenced. Fearing for their lives, many chose to join other exile opponents outside the country.<sup>209</sup>

There still remained uncertainties and fears for some members of the diaspora. Refugees expressed concerns about human rights abuses of the Rwandan government. And, they did not have full confidence in Rwanda's criminal justice system.<sup>210</sup> In 2001, around 55,000 Rwandans

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<sup>204</sup> Wielenga, "Longing for Home," 5.

<sup>205</sup> O'Connor, "Repatriation," 10.

<sup>206</sup> *Rwanda: The Enduring Legacy of the Genocide and War*. Report. New York City: Amnesty International, 2004.

<sup>207</sup> Wielenga, "Longing for Home," 17.

<sup>208</sup> Ibid., 17.

<sup>209</sup> "Rwanda at the End of the Transition," 6.

<sup>210</sup> "Rwanda: The Enduring Legacy."

still remained in neighboring countries, and inside the country Rwandans were leaving the country. This was an indicator that the government's narrative of reconciliation was not as realized as it would like, and it showed that the government was not inspiring the confidence of its own people.<sup>211</sup> Thus, the diaspora had a utilitarian role for Rwanda because it helped combat the propaganda abroad.

While it is evident that the RPF was committed to engaging with the diaspora, it is also clear that there's a motive; to utilize the diaspora. And, while this engagement with the diaspora seemed to be inclusive, it was quite problematic as it reified group identity in Rwanda. This was in line with the message the government wanted to give: that Rwanda can hold all people, has enough resources, is safe, and that everyone is welcome to come back.

Therefore, the diaspora played a second role. The "uncertain" and non-confident diaspora members were also a target of the government; the government wanted to show those who were unwilling to return that there was nothing to be afraid of. The Rwandan government utilized the diaspora because it would help them legitimize their regime and show that Rwanda is in fact a "new Rwanda" that is no longer divided.

In response to the concerns voiced and the tense political climate at home, Kagame called for a National Summit on Reconciliation and Unity in 2000. One of its aims was to encourage Rwandans to return to their homeland.<sup>212</sup> Intended as a forum for debate, Rwandans voiced their opinions. One Rwandan who lived in the Congo posed the question: How can Rwandans willing to return home trust the Government of Rwanda when there are many jailed Rwandans and others are on the wanted list?<sup>213</sup> The Commissioner General of Police responded that it is a "trust-building factor," and furthermore, "Rwandans will trust their country when they realize that they are all equally protected by the laws of the country." Other Rwandans who represented the diaspora in Southern African voiced:

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<sup>211</sup> Waugh, *Paul Kagame and Rwanda*, 210.

<sup>212</sup> Ibid.

<sup>213</sup> Government of Rwanda. *Report of the National Summit on Unity and Reconciliation*. Report. 2002. [http://www.dhnet.org.br/verdade/mundo/ruanda/cv\\_32\\_ruanda\\_report.pdf](http://www.dhnet.org.br/verdade/mundo/ruanda/cv_32_ruanda_report.pdf), 73.

We request the Repatriation Commission and the Unity and Reconciliation Commission to visit the Diaspora more often, and tell them the truth about what is happening back home, so that they can get out of their isolation. Thus, anyone willing to return home can feel free to come. And those choosing to remain abroad should be fed with accurate information as to what obtains back home.<sup>214</sup>

The response to this request was quite interesting:

Rwandans of the diaspora are requested to join in and contribute their part in the process of negotiating a soft exit from the Transition. They are especially requested to convey the correct picture of Rwanda in their countries of residence; they should try as much as they can to prop up Rwanda's image abroad.<sup>215</sup>

This indicates several things. First, the narrative of Rwanda is still unclear. Furthermore, concerns remain. Thus, the government needed the diaspora to be the government's spokesperson and dispel "myths" about the Rwandan narrative. Moreover, it became part of the government's strategy to appeal to a suspicious international community, showing them that their country is ready and willing to welcome their citizens back home. At the same Reconciliation Summit, Kagame made this claim:

Those Rwandans who chose to run away to foreign countries and deceive the international community do a disservice to their motherland and their fellow countrymen and women. Some of them may have committed crimes, while others are driven by their selfish interests; yet others are guided by outmoded and backward ideas based on divisionism and ethnicity. But as we have often stated, every Munyarwanda who would like to come back to their homeland is most welcome.<sup>216</sup>

Thus, the government engaged with the diaspora in a more programmatic way through diaspora return programs, which have come to play an important role in the state's nation building script. Kagame has scheduled multiple meetings with diaspora groups across the world in order to

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<sup>214</sup> "Government of Rwanda. *Report of the National*," 73.

<sup>215</sup> Ibid.

<sup>216</sup> Ibid.

reassure them of their safety and encouraged individuals to “come and see” the country, bringing in Rwandans from all over the world and showing the “new Rwanda.”<sup>217</sup>

The “Come and See, Go and Tell” programs started in 2010 when Kagame met the diaspora in Belgium. Because people were skeptical of Rwanda’s stance, he promise that they could “come and see” the country for themselves and see what has been happening in Rwanda since 1994. He promised that the government would pay all costs for 100 people to visit the country. The only criterion to be eligible was that they had not been in Rwanda for at least 15 years. During their stay in the country, members of the diaspora attend meetings where government officials presented them with “credible information” about Rwanda.<sup>218</sup>

This program is an example of how the RPF has dealt with the “problematic” members of the diaspora who espouse perceptions contrary to what the government claims. Moreover, asking members to return to the country aids in spreading the image of what the state wants to build. Nonetheless, skeptics have acknowledged that this could be a carefully staged performance of the state.<sup>219</sup>

## 7.2.2 The Role of the Diaspora in Building the Narrative of a Reconciled Rwanda

Information disseminated through media and government publications all have this narrative as well, the narrative of success. One news article described the success of the program:

What most of them said is that they are going to say and explain exactly what they saw in Rwanda to their fellows especially where Rwanda has reached in development. They thanked the government of Rwanda for initiating ‘Come and See, Go and Tell’ program which make people know exactly the truth about what is happening in Rwanda which is contrary to the rumours they heard.”<sup>220</sup>

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<sup>217</sup> Turner, “Staging the Rwandan Diaspora,” 275.

<sup>218</sup> Shindo, “Hidden Effect,” 1697.

<sup>219</sup> Turner, “Staging the Rwandan Diaspora,” 275.

<sup>220</sup> “Refugees Praise ‘Come And See, Go And Tell’ Program.” *News of Rwanda*, May 31, 2012. <http://www.newsofrwanda.com/ibikorwa/9112/refugees-praise-come-see-tell-program/>.

In 2014, the government published a report entitled “Repatriation and Reintegration Programs for Rwanda Refugees.”<sup>221</sup> It spoke of different success stories that Rwandans returning from the diaspora had. One Rwandan returnee described:

Concerning democracy there is a positive and great transformation in the Government of Rwanda's policy which allows opposition political parties to do lawfully their political activities. Hon. Commissioner, I found my home country, Rwanda safe, peaceful and secured. I was satisfied that I do not have any fear of living there. Therefore, I do not find any reason for Rwandans to continue to be called refugees. Thus I decide to abandon refugee's life to go back to my home country.

This was an official report from the government, which failed to mention anything whatsoever about the immense challenges that returnees would definitely have. Instead, the narrative was that it was a positive and successful life change.

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<sup>221</sup> “Former Rwandan refugees impressed by tremendous development in Rwanda,” *Republic of Rwanda*, [http://midimar.gov.rw/index.php?id=45&tx\\_ttnews%5Btt\\_news%5D=55&cHash=24a83d6875cc7da118428f0d5e0421f9](http://midimar.gov.rw/index.php?id=45&tx_ttnews%5Btt_news%5D=55&cHash=24a83d6875cc7da118428f0d5e0421f9)

### 7.3 Creating the Ideal Citizen Through Reeducation

Hintjens argued: “Citizenship is presented not as an organic quality, but as something that must be built and inculcated through the right education, ideology and practices.”<sup>222</sup> The RPF has made it clear that rebuilding ideologies played a crucial role in state building, particularly in fighting divisive roles. It sought a more practical approach to nation building by implementing education camps aimed at “reeducating” the Rwandan citizenry.

#### 7.3.1 Ingando Civic Camps

These Ingando camps were put in place in 1996 and they have been called various things, such as ‘solidarity camps’, ‘re-education’ camps, ‘civic education’ camps, ‘political awareness’ camps, ‘reorientation’ camps, and ‘reintegration’ courses. They were non-voluntary and lasted around three to eight weeks long, and included several hundred participants.

Most importantly, they were taught reconciliatory practices. Participants had to come together to discuss “problems of national concern.”<sup>223</sup> The government’s objectives with these programs were to achieve “lasting harmony” among Rwandans. Ingando camps are especially interesting in the context of analyzing RPF politics, as they provide a way to see what populations the government targets and believes is most in need of “reeducation.”<sup>224</sup> Originally, the camps were targeted toward returning Tutsi who had spent years living outside Rwanda. But, it actually came to include many different groups in the community, including “old caseload” and “new caseload” returnees, ex-FAR soldiers and demobilized rebels, provisionally released prisoners, sex workers and, most recently, pre-university students on government scholarships, teachers, youth groups, and civil servants.

Interestingly, it was evident there was a clearly different focus depending on the group. For the old caseload returnees, the focus was to primarily promote a sense of unity. In contrast, for new case load refugees, education was focused on stopping divisive ideologies and genocide

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<sup>222</sup> Hintjens, “When Identity Becomes a Knife,” 48.

<sup>223</sup> Purdekova, “Repatriation and Reconciliation.”

<sup>224</sup> Ibid.



mentalities. As one government official remarked: “Remember also that you are former Hutu we are all Rwandans now and this is the basis of our history lessons.”<sup>225</sup> According to Human Rights Watch, these camps for new case load refugees were meant to “promote ideas of nationalism, erase ethnically-charged lessons of the previous government and spur loyalty to the RPF.”<sup>226</sup> However, the nature of these camps was questionable. They were described as having military-like discipline; one participant remarked “men around me said it was no better than prison.”<sup>227</sup>

### 7.3.2 “Itorero” Civic Education

Another program specifically targets Rwandans living abroad in the diaspora. In keeping with the Rwandan narrative of unity, these programs specifically targeted Rwandans living abroad, to reeducate them and mobilize them. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Cooperated recommend that those in the diaspora attend “Itorero,” which according to the Diaspora General Directorate is: “Rwandan civic education institution which aims mainly to teach all Rwandese to keep their culture through its different values for their unity and patriotism...”<sup>228</sup> The National Itorero Commission lists that its first mission is to train Rwandans to: “make them understand their shared values and taboos in their coexistence, be patriotic and contribute to national development.”<sup>229</sup>

Dr. Celestin Ntivuguruzwa, the permanent secretary at the Ministry of Education, said: “They have different ideas that are taken into consideration for the development of the country. The lessons they will learn include Rwanda’s history, Rwandan values, the culture of self-reliance and patriotism.”<sup>230</sup>

In reaching out beyond Rwanda’s state borders to engage with Rwandans abroad, the government was committed to spreading ideals of unity, patriotism, and civil duty. Furthermore,

<sup>225</sup> Susan Thompson, “Reeducation for Reconciliation: Participant Observations on Ingando” in *Remaking Rwanda: State Building and Human Rights After Mass Violence*, edited by Lars Waldorf and Scott Straus, 331-339. Madison, Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press, 2011.

<sup>226</sup> Purdekova, “De-ethnicisation,” 21.

<sup>227</sup> Thomson, “Reeducation for Reconciliation,” 335.

<sup>228</sup> Shindo, “Hidden Effects,” 1690 ; “Itorero,” Rwandan Diaspora Directorate.  
<http://www.rwandandiaspora.gov.rw/programs/itorero/>.

<sup>229</sup> “Mandate: Itorero,” National Itorero Commission, <http://nic.gov.rw/index.php?id=10&L=1>.

<sup>230</sup> “Diaspora Students start Itorero Today,” *The New Times*, July 13, 2015,  
<http://www.newtimes.co.rw/section/article/2015-07-13/190565/>.

Francis Kaboneka, the Minister for Local Governance, remarked in the programs that “many Genocide perpetrators were professionals but they lacked the most important things: norms and values.”<sup>231</sup> With this remark, two things are evident: the government still alludes to the genocide framework when discussing “problematic” citizens; and that the way to combat this was through instilling a “certain type of education.”<sup>232</sup>

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<sup>231</sup> “Rwandans Urged to Uphold National Values,” *The New Times*, June 17, 2015, <http://www.newtimes.co.rw/section/article/2015-06-17/189818/>.

<sup>232</sup> *Ibid.*

## **Chapter 8: Falling Short of a United, Reconciled Rwanda**

What can we conclude from an assessment of identity politics, nation building, and diaspora policies in post-genocide Rwanda? This final chapter problematizes the RPF's engagement with the diaspora as part of its nation building narrative. This chapter argues that the way in which the government has collectively grouped identities in Rwanda, politicized these identities, and have significant and problematic implications. While there are claims from the government that Rwanda is a united a reconciled post-conflict state, there remains challenges that the government must address if it truly wants to transcend divisive identities. This chapter provides a critical analysis of the RPF's political motives and implications of these policies. This chapter serves as a critical discussion of some of the most pertinent implications of the role of identity politics in Rwanda's nation building, such as the problems associated with an increased restrictive political space and strict management of identities. This chapter will examine this in three themes: moving beyond identity and genocide framework; governance and political space; and finally, reconciliation.

### **8.1 Silenced Narratives: Between Collective Identities and Lived Identities**

#### **8.1.1 Restrictive Identities**

The government has tried to manage identities of Rwandans inside and outside the country by prescribing labels, redefining what it means to be a "good citizen," and punishing those considered to be a "bad citizen." In Rwanda, there is now a very strict narrow definition of what identities are "allowed" to exist in public spaces; being "Rwandan" is now the only politically correct identity. In an effort to build a national common identity of unity and reconciliation, this thesis has shown how the RPF has recreated and reimaged collective identities in Rwanda. These identities are part of an explicit top-down narrative that reinforces essentialist thinking. This narrative provokes images of a united Rwanda with a common people with share ideologies and goals.

However, this single identity cannot adequately reflect the diverse experiences of Rwandans in and outside the country. Moreover, "a general cultural identity as 'Rwandan' did not always

facilitate political integration into Rwanda, nor did it always address the particular process of “coming home,” as Newbury pointed out.<sup>233</sup> Instead, these identities are restrictive and are not reflective of the complex identities of Rwandans, based on an array of things like lived experiences, and other cross-sectional identities (ie. gender, class).

In Rwanda, there exists a very strict and narrow definition of which identities are “allowed” to exist in public spaces; being ‘Rwanda’ is now the only politically correct identity. The new single identity - “Rwandan” - and the narrative of unity has sought to simply replace difference “silenced” identities and perceptions rather than reconciling them in a meaningful way. The labels are too simplistic and can be misleading. For example, the term “old caseload returnees” does not reflect what the politicized label attached to it permits. There are immensely different experiences of people labeled as “old caseload.” Those who returned from Uganda mostly held high positions when they returned to Rwanda, in government or civil society. Alternatively, Tutsi who returned from Tanzania, Zaire, and Burundi often felt more marginalized as to the position the “received” in society. Among other reasons, in the eyes of the government, these “groups” of Tutsi seemed to be categorically different from their Anglophone counterparts as Francophone speakers. Additionally, they were viewed as not having contributed to the liberation of Rwanda in 1994, unlike the heroic Tutsis from Uganda.<sup>234</sup> Thus, this is just one illustration of how much more complex and problematic these labels are.

Until the identity issues and attitudes at the heart of the conflict are addressed and deconstructed in a meaningful way, these divisive identities may continue to be politicized and utilized. Thus, there is no homogenous and simplistic “old caseload returnee” category, just as much as there is no homogenous Tutsi category. Likewise, Gourevitch described that the historically ethnic state created a world of just “us and them” but the reality was quite different. Instead, it was:

...An elaborate grid of subcategories lay just beneath the surface. There were Hutus with good records, and suspect Hutus, Hutus in exile and displaced Hutus, Hutus who wanted to work with the RPF, and anti-Power Hutus who were also anti RPF.....”<sup>235</sup>

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<sup>233</sup> Newbury, “Returning Refugee,” 284.

<sup>234</sup> Turner, “Victims, Saviors, and Suspects,” 93.

<sup>235</sup> Gourevitch, *We Wish to Inform You*, 235.

Thus, intergroup tensions, different perceptions, commonalties, and shared experiences, all existed beyond these categories.<sup>236</sup>

However, despite the government narrative, different identities are still relevant and exist outside the government discourse. They go beyond a simple ethnic dichotomy. Purdekova argued that after the genocide, “although these categories are banned from public discourse, they survive as identifications in private, and they continue to structure day-to-day lives. It can be said that the act of genocide and its memory have strengthened the boundaries and the self-identification on either side of the divide even as ethnic categories have disappeared from identity cards and official social and political engineering.”<sup>237</sup> This shows that identities cannot be reconstructed that easily, despite massive efforts from the government. Instead, there continues to be a polarizing discourse that groups people together arbitrarily, and based on political motive. There is now a narrative in Rwanda that is just as exclusionary as it is inclusionary.<sup>238</sup>

### 8.1.2 Managing Identities in a Tightened Political Space

The context of these silenced and restrictive identities must be situated in the context of state power. The government wanted to construct a narrative of Rwandan society that is manageable, yet the diaspora poses a threat to that. However, the government also acknowledged the role that the diaspora could play in building the state narrative. Unfortunately this has real repercussions, as identities in post-genocide Rwanda have been continued to be politicized. In general, politicized identities will be generally problematic. As Hintjens describes: “Identity politics became a means of legitimizing collective violence and scapegoating, and a knife in the back of the civilian population as a whole, victims and victimizers alike.”<sup>239</sup>

This is not a new concept. In such a historically divisive country based on ethnic difference, the government has manipulated identity for state gains. For example, as one scholar put it, “from 1973 to 1994, President Juvénal Habyarimana emphasized his conception of the “true” Rwandan

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<sup>236</sup> Purdekova, “Beyond Deethnicization,” 11-12.

<sup>237</sup> Ibid.,” 2.

<sup>238</sup> Burnet, “Whose Genocide,” 89.

<sup>239</sup> Hintjens, *When Identity Becomes a Knife*, 25.

identity, which was someone who engaged in agricultural production and promotes welfare of the state and his community.”<sup>240</sup> At the time, this narrative reflected what Habyarimana prioritized, which was agriculturally developing the state. Therefore, defining who a Rwandan is became a politicized action depending on what the current state wants. This is problematic because it suggests that state power in Rwanda thinks that it can reconstruct identities to result in a certain type of identity and category of citizenship.

Furthermore, Wielenga argues that these categories are problematic because they “[have] the danger to further essentialise personal identity by creating a new category of what it means to be Rwandan that will yet again marginalise, hegemonise and exclude some in order to empower others.”<sup>241</sup> Thus, “instead of successfully transcending ethnic divisions, the government policy of denying ethnicity seems to have exacerbated the divisions. This is in spite of attempts to introduce robust citizenship discourse.”<sup>242</sup>

What role does the state engagement with the diaspora have in this narrative? As one Rwandan living in exile stated: ‘The Rwandan government cannot rest easy as long as it is aware that there are still Rwandans in exile beyond its control.’<sup>243</sup> The narrative of security and unity was very important in the post-genocide efforts. These efforts to nation build and fight genocidal ideologies abroad were seen as necessary for a state rebuilding from such extremely delicate and tense social climate. Unity and reconciliation was necessary and the programs put in place were a great start. However, gradually, as the RPF consolidated state control, the tightened political space proved to be problematic, as there seemed to be more indication that the RPF sought to manage control of the country, under the guise of security and reconciliation. This is evident in the way it has sought to control political space abroad as well.

In 2006, President Kagame made a speech at a North American Rwanda Convention in the United States, where he criticized self-exiled politics, saying that Rwanda has built a political system that is backed by the Constitution. He stated that was no reason that would stop someone

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<sup>240</sup> Philip Verwimp, “Peasant Ideology and Genocide in Rwanda Under Habyarimana,” Center for Economic Studies, Working Paper Series of the GSP at Yale, 1999.

<sup>241</sup> Wielenga, “Lived Identities,” 125.

<sup>242</sup> Ibid.

<sup>243</sup> Rose Jaji, “Under the Shadows of Genocide: Rwanda, Ethnicity and Refugee Status,” *Ethnicities*: no 0 (2015), 1-19.

from forming a political party, and that the government believes in power sharing.”<sup>244</sup> However, to what extent is this statement true? There seems to be a disconnect between reality and the government discourse. Human rights organizations, scholars, journalists, and Rwanda exiles abroad tell a different narrative. Rwanda has been repeatedly accused of violated human rights and denying free speech in order to maintain their narrative of unity. The government has a much lesser degree of control over people in the diaspora, thus members of the diaspora threaten the state’s sovereign power.

## 8.2 Challenges for Reconciliation

There is no doubt that identity politics remain salient in Rwandan politics. Thus, challenges remain for the post-genocide state, in terms of achieving “reconciliation” as part of the transitional justice process. Susan Thompson paints a clear picture of the tensions and problematic notions of the prospect for reconciliation in Rwanda:

The official position is that reconciliation between these two groups is ongoing and successful—Rwanda is both peaceful and safe. Survivors can speak of their experiences in sanctioned settings, such as during the April mourning period or at the *gacaca* justice trials. Perpetrators can hang their head in shame and ask for forgiveness once they have told the truth about what they did. It is these two narrow and essentialist categories of “survivor” and “perpetrator” that are the protagonist of national unity and reconciliation, to the exclusion of other actors and experiences of violence.<sup>245</sup>

This example shows that despite the government narrative, real lived experiences, as this thesis has explored, are in reality much different.

Mamdani said: “If the Hutu demand democracy, a recognition that they are the political majority, the Tutsi demand justice, a claim that the right to life must precede any recognition of a political majority. Is it possible to reconcile these seemingly conflicting demands: democracy and

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<sup>244</sup> Turner, “Staging the Rwanda,” 278.

<sup>245</sup> Thompson, “Rwanda’s National Unity.”

justice...? *Without the notion of justice appropriate to a postgenocide situation, it will not be possible to construct a political identity other than Hutu and Tutsi in postgenocide Rwanda.*"<sup>246</sup>

Justice, therefore, is a key theme in reconciliatory efforts, as part of the transitional justice process when a country experiences devastating and traumatic violence. Yet, collective political identities remain salient in Rwanda, and that is a major hindrance to reconciliation in Rwanda. The RPF's narrative of the genocide and its rebuilding is loaded with assumptions based on political identities.

In Rwanda, this is problematic. Having collective identities in Rwanda has big implication because there is collective Hutu guilt. There will not be true reconciliation if crimes on both sides are not addressed. There have been little transitional justice mechanisms put in place to address the RPF war crimes during 1994, including reprisal killings, as well as the alleged massacres in eastern Zaire from 1996 - 1997. Many have called for bringing the RPF to justice for their alleged war crimes. Without reconciling the needs for justice, that go beyond the government labels, the Rwandan society may exacerbate feelings of resentment and distrust.<sup>247</sup>

In transition justice mechanisms in Rwanda, divisive collectives and politicized identities are relevant too. President Kagame expressed that "there can be no durable reconciliation as long as those who are responsible for the massacres in Rwanda are not properly tried." However, it is clear that justice, for the RPF, was only prescribed to certain groups in Rwanda.<sup>248</sup> Collective guilt is very clear in the Rwandan discourse, and it goes along with the notion of the RPF's collective victimhood. Kagame had addressed Hutu children as recent as 2013 and told them to apologize for their parents' actions.<sup>249</sup> This has very problematic implications for trying to overcome group-identity based politics in Rwanda. As Mamdani stated: "there can be no reconciliation without a reorganization of power."<sup>250</sup> In the case of Rwanda, power politics coupled with identity politics clearly challenge Rwandan's prospect for reconciliation.

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<sup>246</sup> Mamdani, *When Victims Become Killers*, 39, my emphasis.

<sup>247</sup> Zorbas, "Reconciliation in Post-Genocide," 41.

<sup>248</sup> Prunier, *The Rwanda Crisis*, 343.

<sup>249</sup> "Rwanda : President Kagame's medieval ideology of visiting the iniquity of the Hutu fathers upon children divides Rwandan society" July 18, 2013, <http://www.france-rwanda.info/article-rwanda-president-kagame-s-medieval-ideology-of-visiting-the-iniquity-of-the-hutu-fathers-upon-chil-119135254.html>.

<sup>250</sup> Mamdani, *When Victims Become Killers*, 268.



## Conclusion: Transcending Divisive Identities?

Twenty years after the end of genocide, Phil Clark reflects: “foreign leaders and journalists who descend on Rwanda this year will find a country that, under the leadership of President Paul Kagame, has recorded enormous gains since the genocide in terms of rebuilding infrastructure, socioeconomic development, gender equality, accountability for genocide perpetrators, and the integration of former combatants.”<sup>251</sup> This has been attested to Paul Kagame’s Rwandan Patriotic Front, who’s leadership has made important strides toward reconciliation and rebuilding a narrative of a unified Rwandan identity. Indicators on poverty, health and the economy continue to move in the right direction.<sup>252</sup> However, the reality is that divisive identities in Rwanda, more than two decades after the end of the genocide, still remain. “The root cause of ethnic violence (in 1994 as in 1959), must be found in the extent to which collective identities have been reactivated, mythologized and manipulated for political advantage.” Rene Lemarchand expressed this sentiment in 1994, but these identities are still vastly present and salient in the post-genocide period, and are still problematic.

This case study aimed to analyze the problems with identities, in the context of post-genocide Rwanda nation building. The central question raised in this thesis was: *In what ways, and to what extent, have identity politics affected the nation building project in post-genocide Rwanda, in relation to its diaspora?*

Rwanda’s turbulent history raises many issues with the political and social construction of Rwandan identity. Yet, scholarship on Rwanda’s post-genocide dynamics has not substantially examined the role of the diaspora, nor the state’s engagement with its diaspora. This thesis sought to examine these dynamics. It did so by examining: (1) the ways in which the RPF reconfigured identities inside Rwanda by perpetuating the narrative of unity; (2) the collective identities ascribed to groups of citizens inside and outside Rwanda, based on this government narrative; (3) how the RPF governed perceptions abroad; and finally (4) the education programs to shape the idea Rwandan citizen.

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<sup>251</sup> Clark, “After Genocide: Democracy in Rwanda, 20 Years On.”

<sup>252</sup> “Memo to Dutch Politicians: Ask About Gikondo,” *Human Rights Watch*, October 2, 2015, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2015/10/02/memo-dutch-politicians-ask-about-gikondo>.

How successful was the RPF in nation building and overcoming divisive identities? While there is no way of truly answering this, there are clear indicators that give insight into the state of governance. Through this critical analysis, I draw certain conclusions. The Rwandan government, in trying to rebuild the nation, has failed to transcend divisive identities that have pervaded in Rwanda. Instead, it has created a tightly controlled political space in which a restrictive single identity and narrative existed. The state's engagement with its diaspora helps illustrate this.

The RPF's engagement with the diaspora during the transitional and post transition period is reflective of the political nature of post-genocide Rwanda. Despite the efforts of the RPF to create a new Rwanda in which divisive identities are no longer salient, identity-laden politics remain key in Rwandan politics. Identities are complex and ever-changing with the political landscape, and thus are not as simplistic as a Tutsi –Hutu divide. Instead, identities linked with citizenship and victimhood, histories of mobility, and lived experiences.

This thesis contributes to a growing body of literature on diaspora and its role in rebuilding post conflict states. While the Rwandan case study may seem unique due to the scale of extreme violence, examining this case study provides a comprehensive yet nuanced look at identity politics for countries that are trying to rebuild and has historically deep divisions and an overwhelming need to reconcile. While the future role of the Rwandan diaspora remains uncertain, one thing is clear: identities must be understood in a framework that goes well beyond its national borders.

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